



ALEX ALICE

SIEGFRIED III

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS



ARCHAIA and DARGAUD presents



in association with PENDRAGON IMAGEFORGE

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS



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BOOM! Studios, 5670 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 450, Los Angeles, CA 90036-5679. Printed in China. First Printing.

ISBN: 978-1-60886-420-1, eISBN: 978-1-61398-274-7

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ODIN...
DO YOU REMEMBER
OUR FIRST DAWN,
MY LOVE?



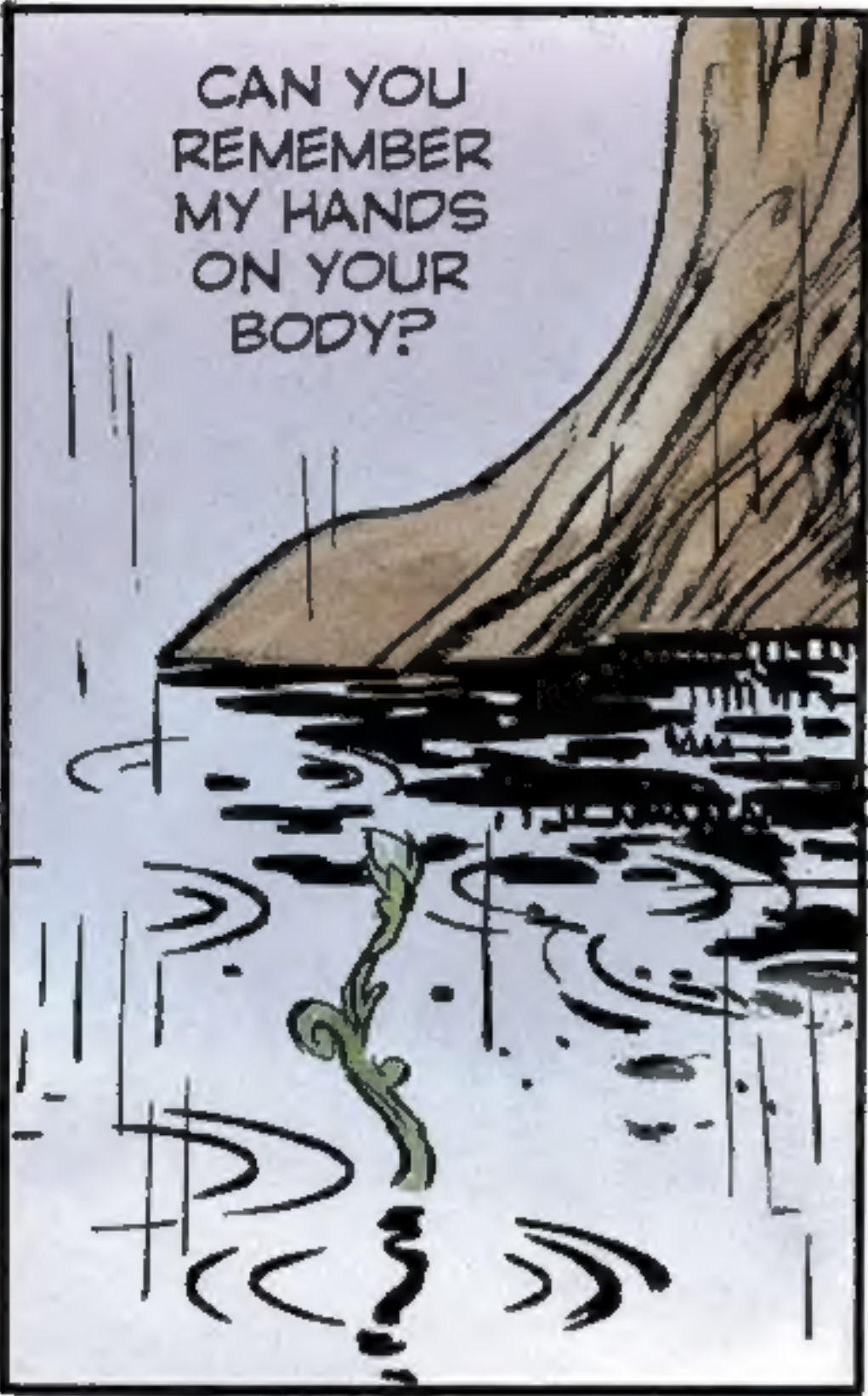
YOU DID
NOT KNOW
FEAR...



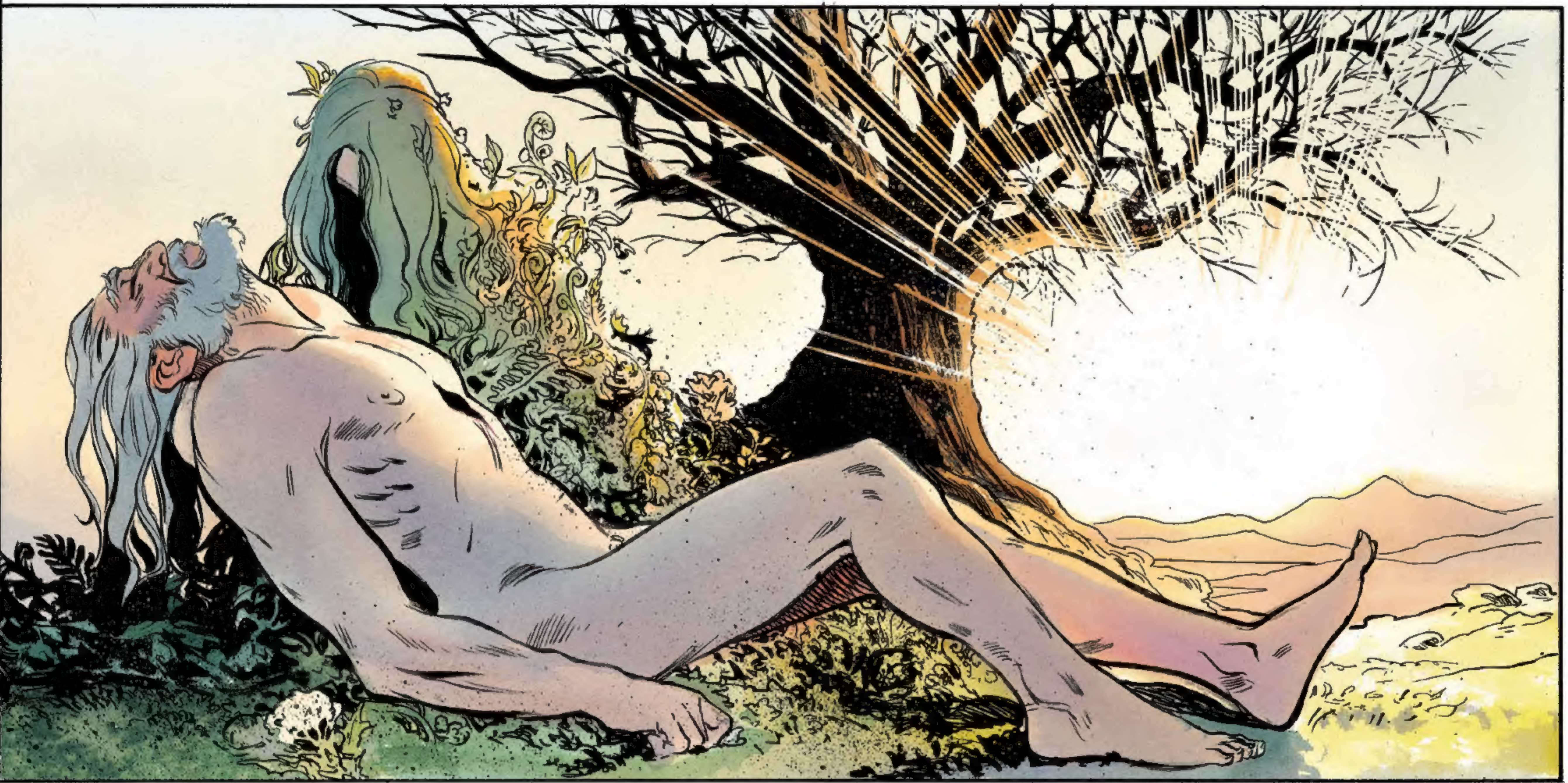
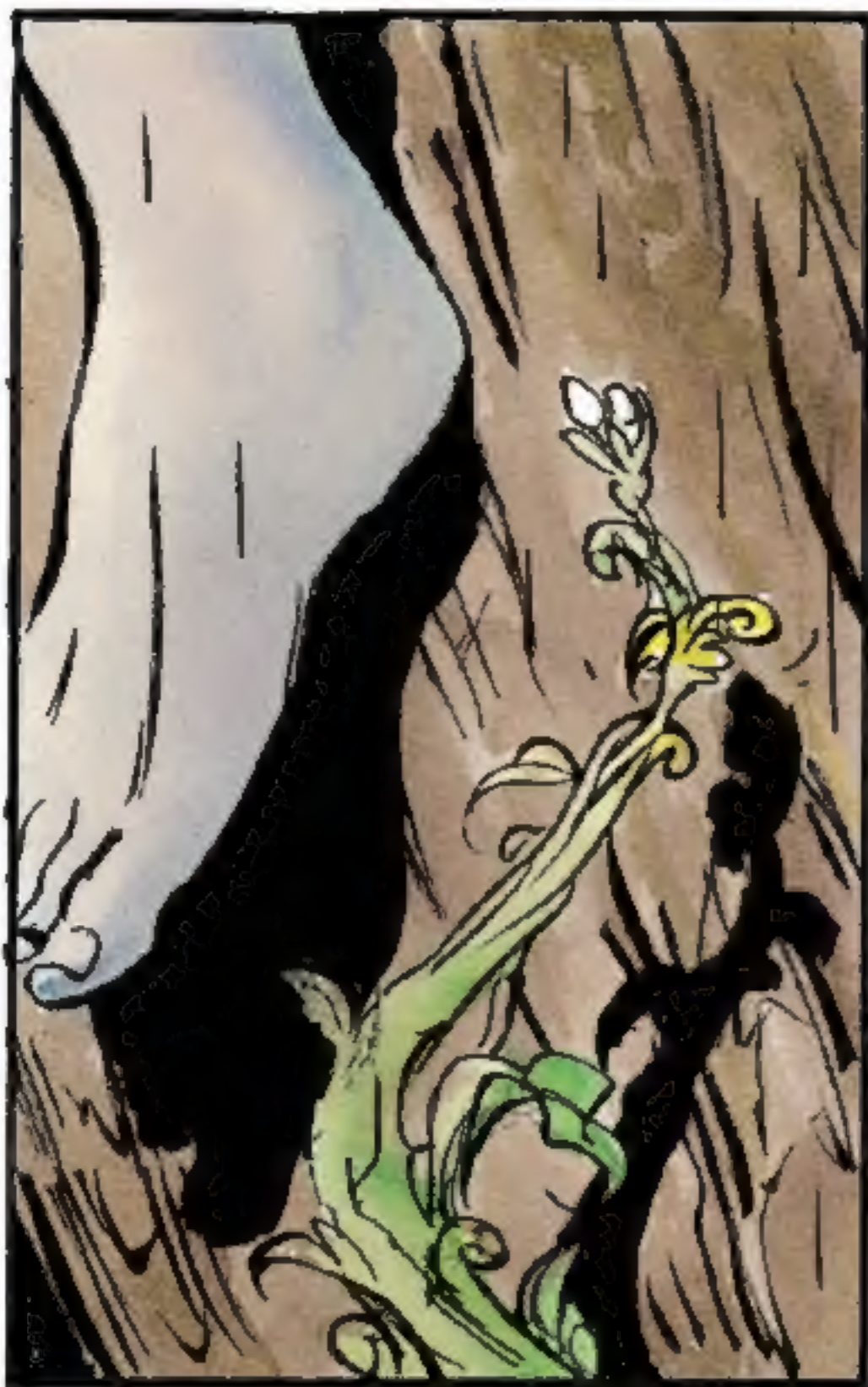
...BUT
GIANTS DID
NOT KNOW
DEFEAT.



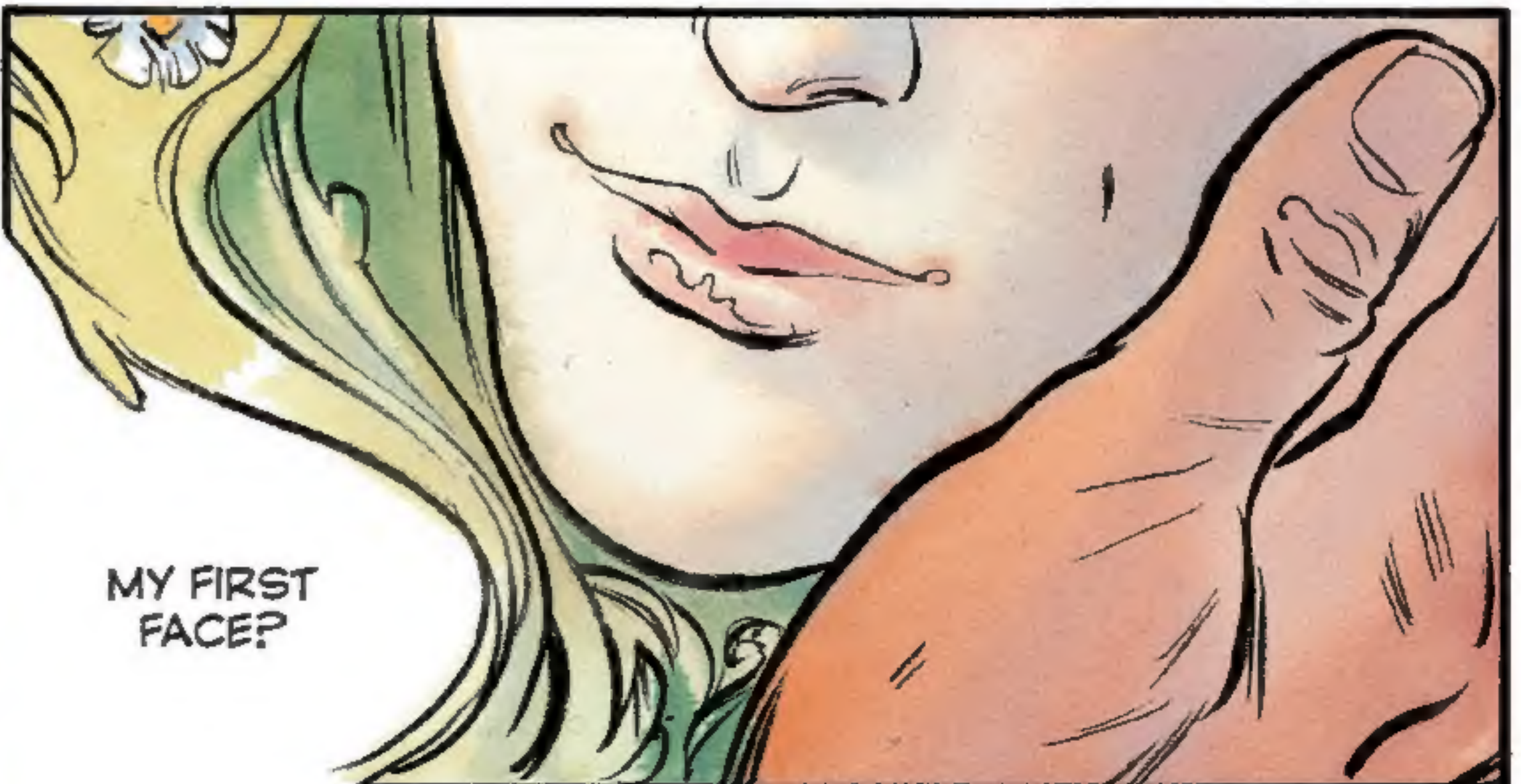
NINE DAYS
AND NINE NIGHTS
PASSED.



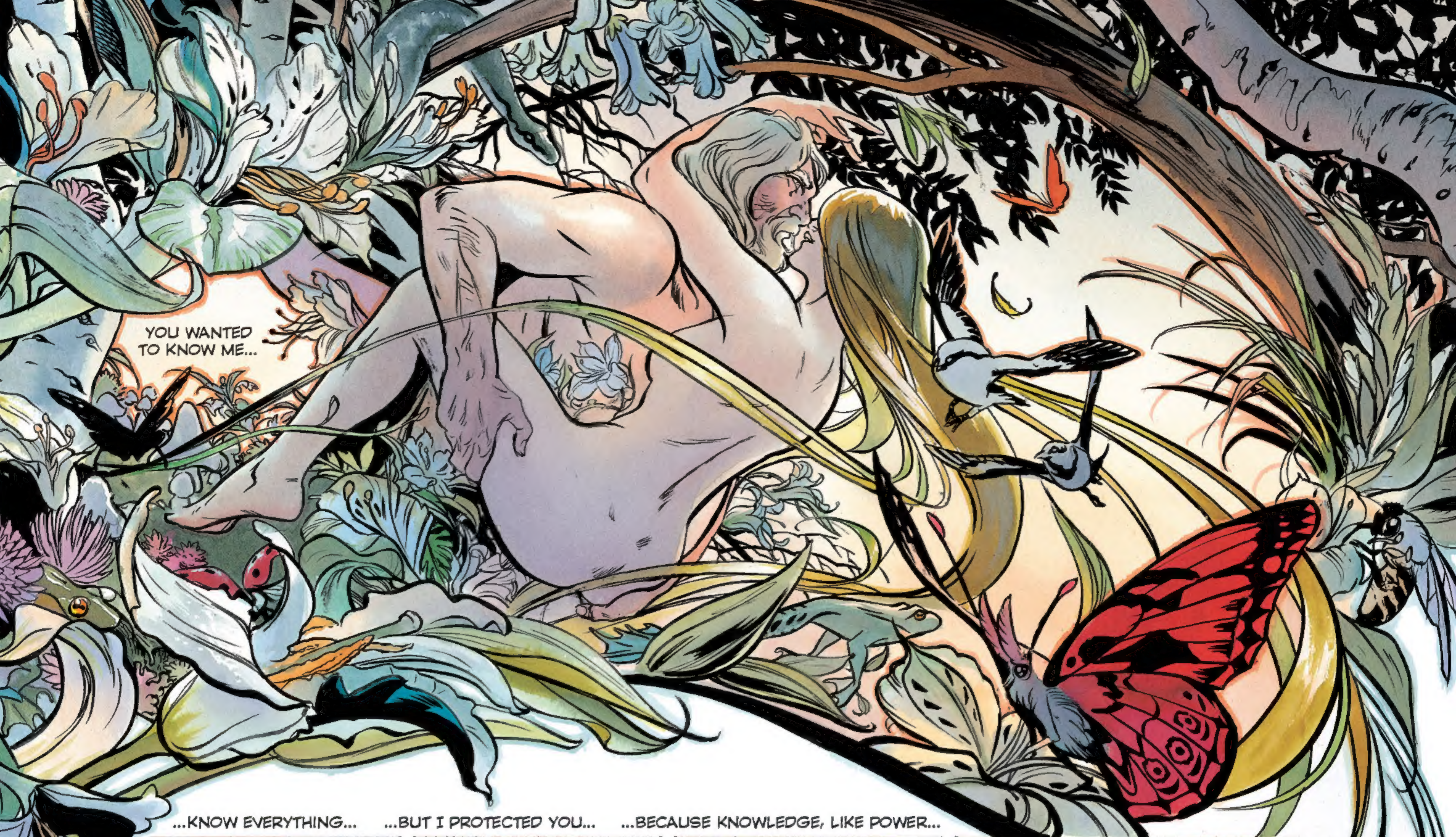
CAN YOU
REMEMBER
MY HANDS
ON YOUR
BODY?



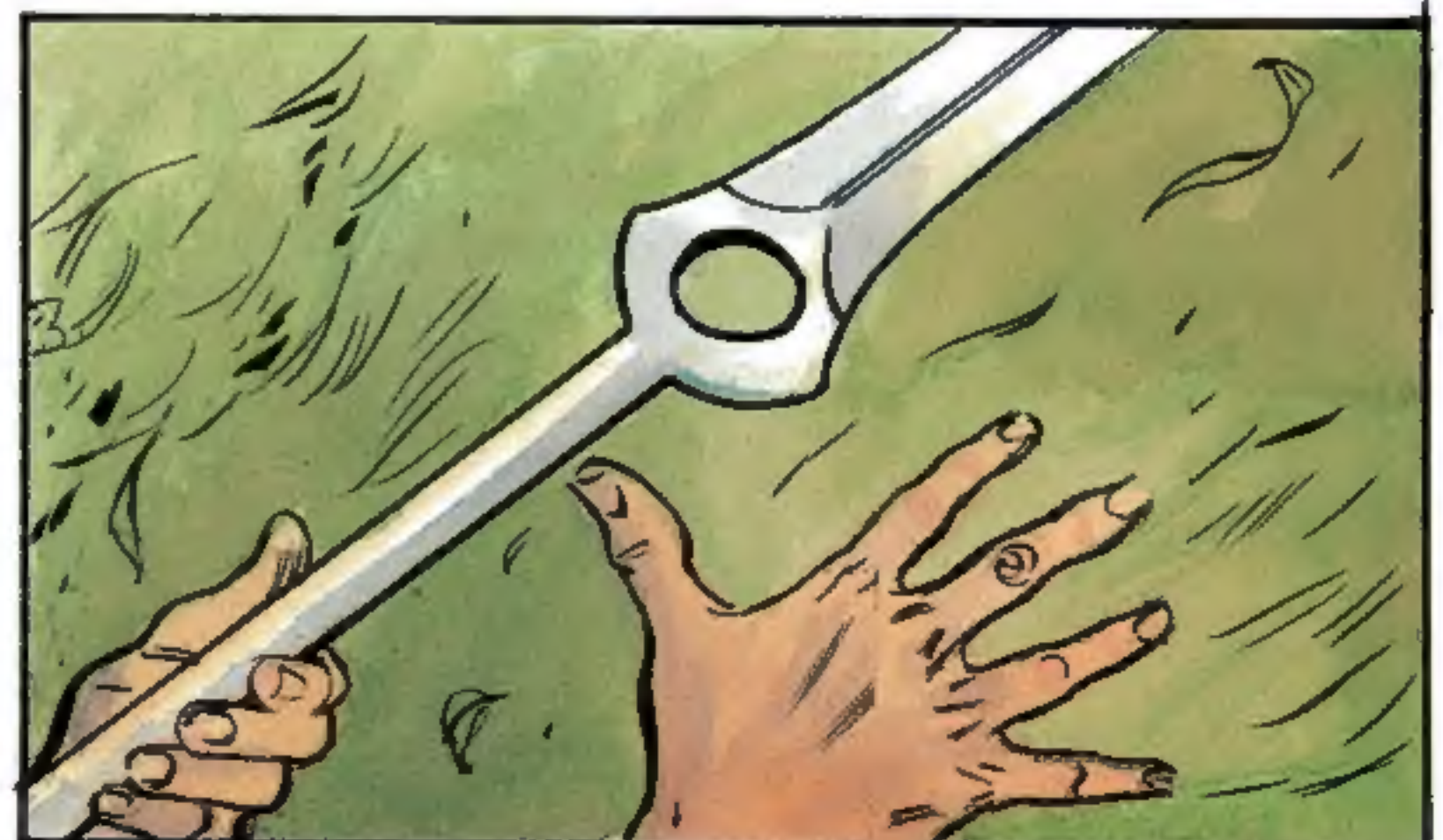
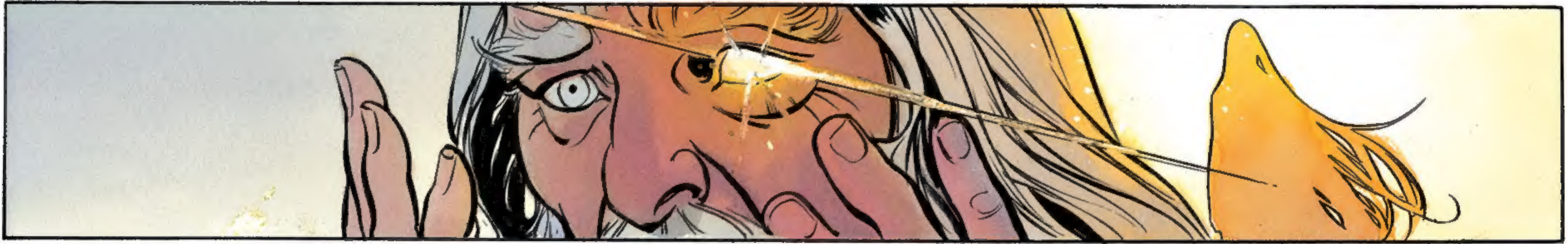
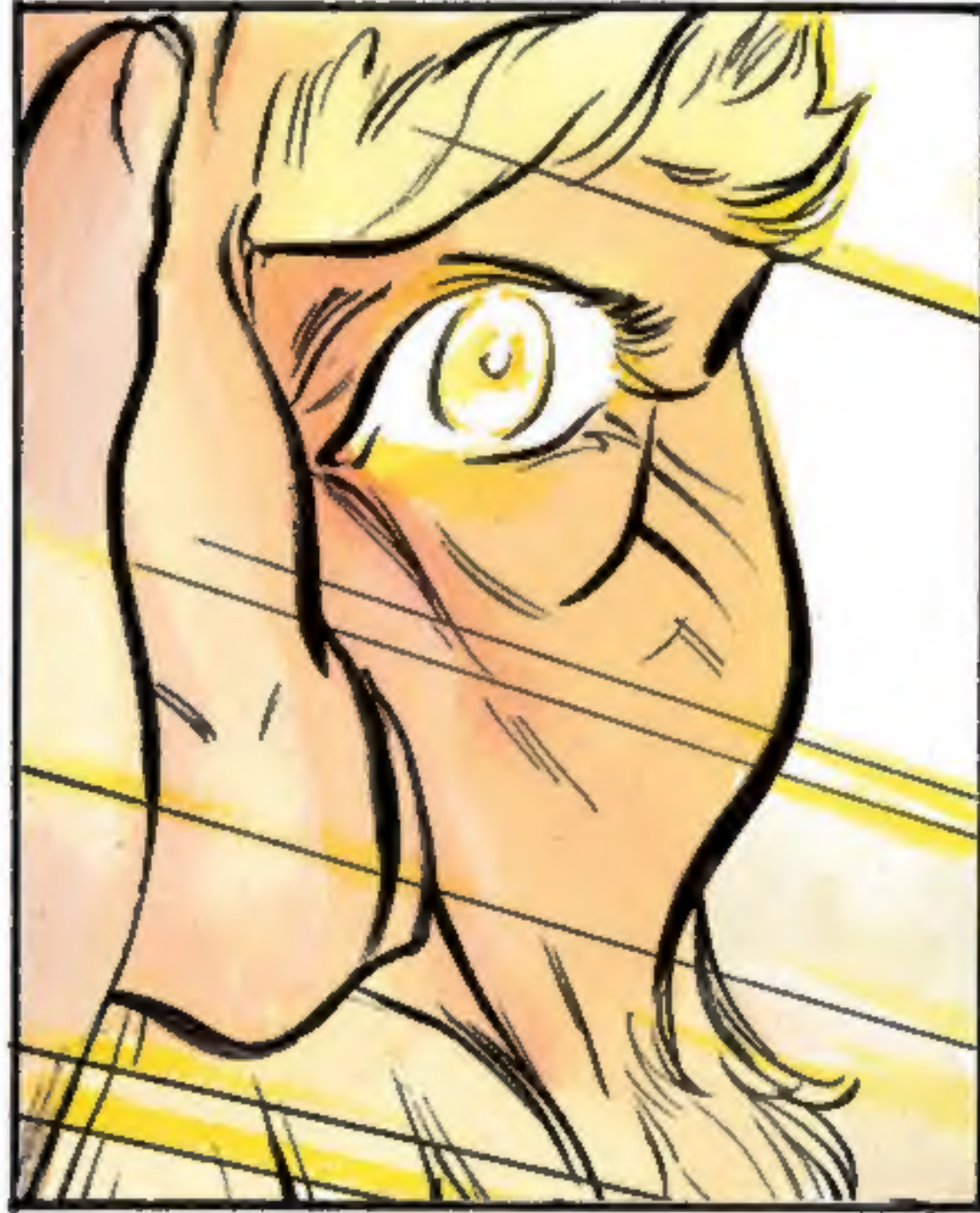
DO YOU
REMEMBER
MY FACE?



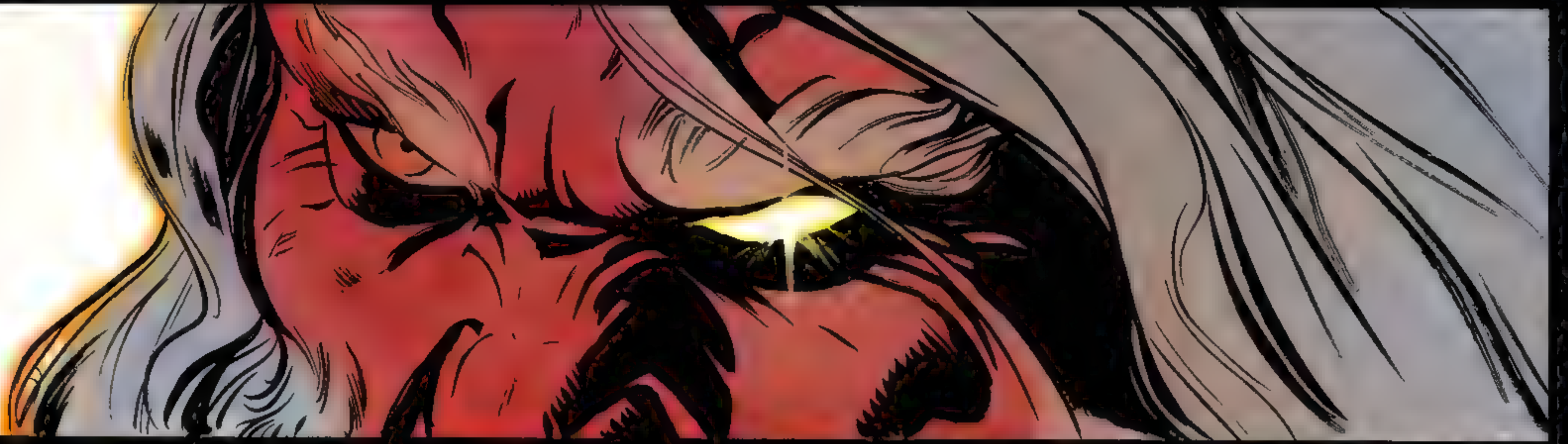
MY FIRST
FACE?



...KNOW EVERYTHING... ...BUT I PROTECTED YOU... ...BECAUSE KNOWLEDGE, LIKE POWER...



SO I HEARD
YOUR VOICE...
YOUR WORDS...
YOUR LAW.



I UNDERSTOOD
WHERE YOU WOULD
GET YOUR POWER.



AND AS YOU
SUBMITTED
THE WORLD TO
YOUR SPEAR...

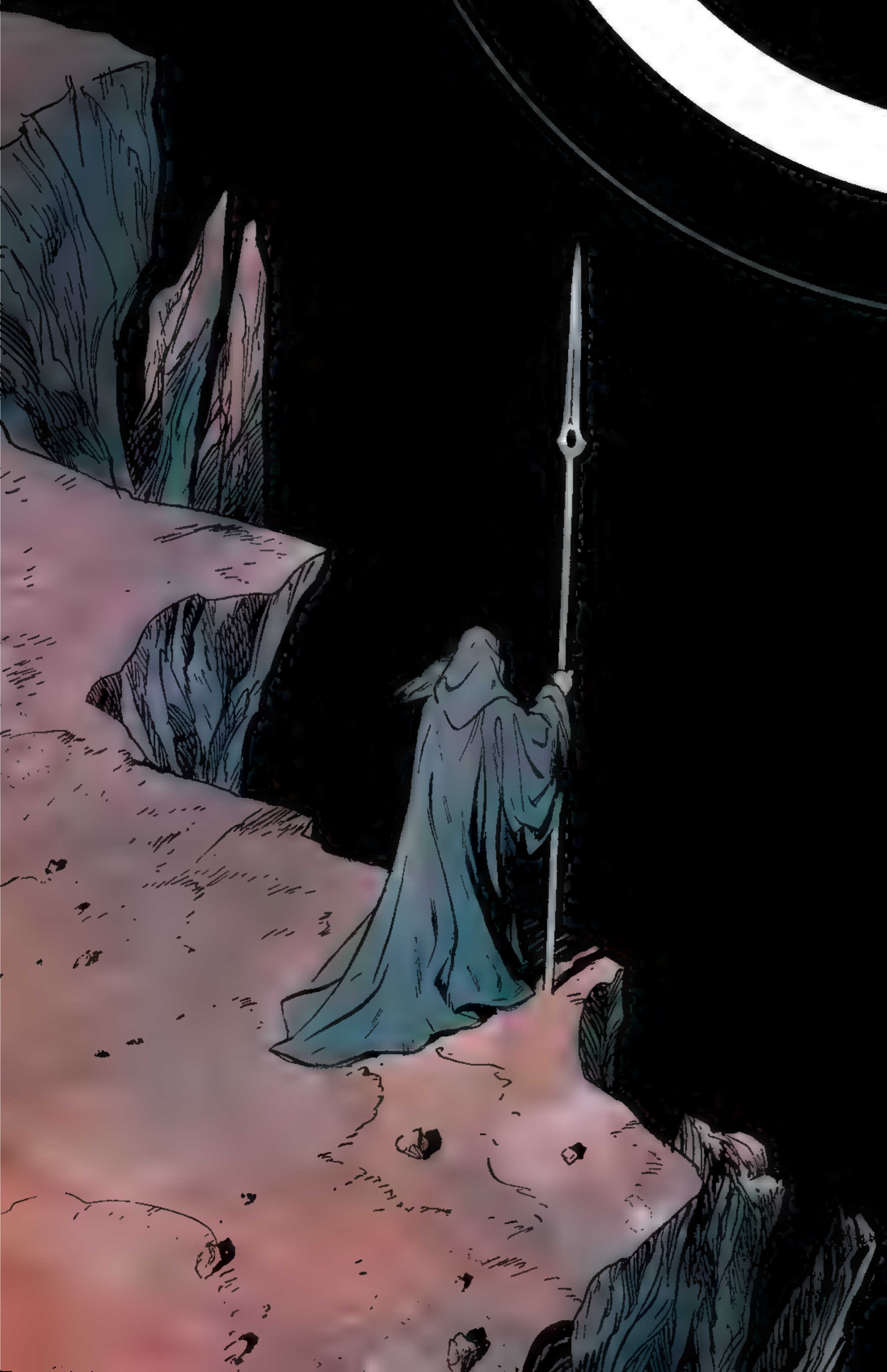


I KNEW HOW
IT WOULD
END.

OVERTURE



ODIN...





I HAVE
COME TO
WARN YOU,
LORD OF THE
NIBELUNGS...

LET THE
EARTH LIVE,
RENOUNCE
THE GOLD...

...OR
PERISH.



PLEAS...
THREATS.

YOUR SPEAR
CANNOT HURT
ME. YOU ARE THE
WEAKEST OF ALL
OF US. RULING
BY YOUR LAW,
PRISONER OF
YOUR LAW.

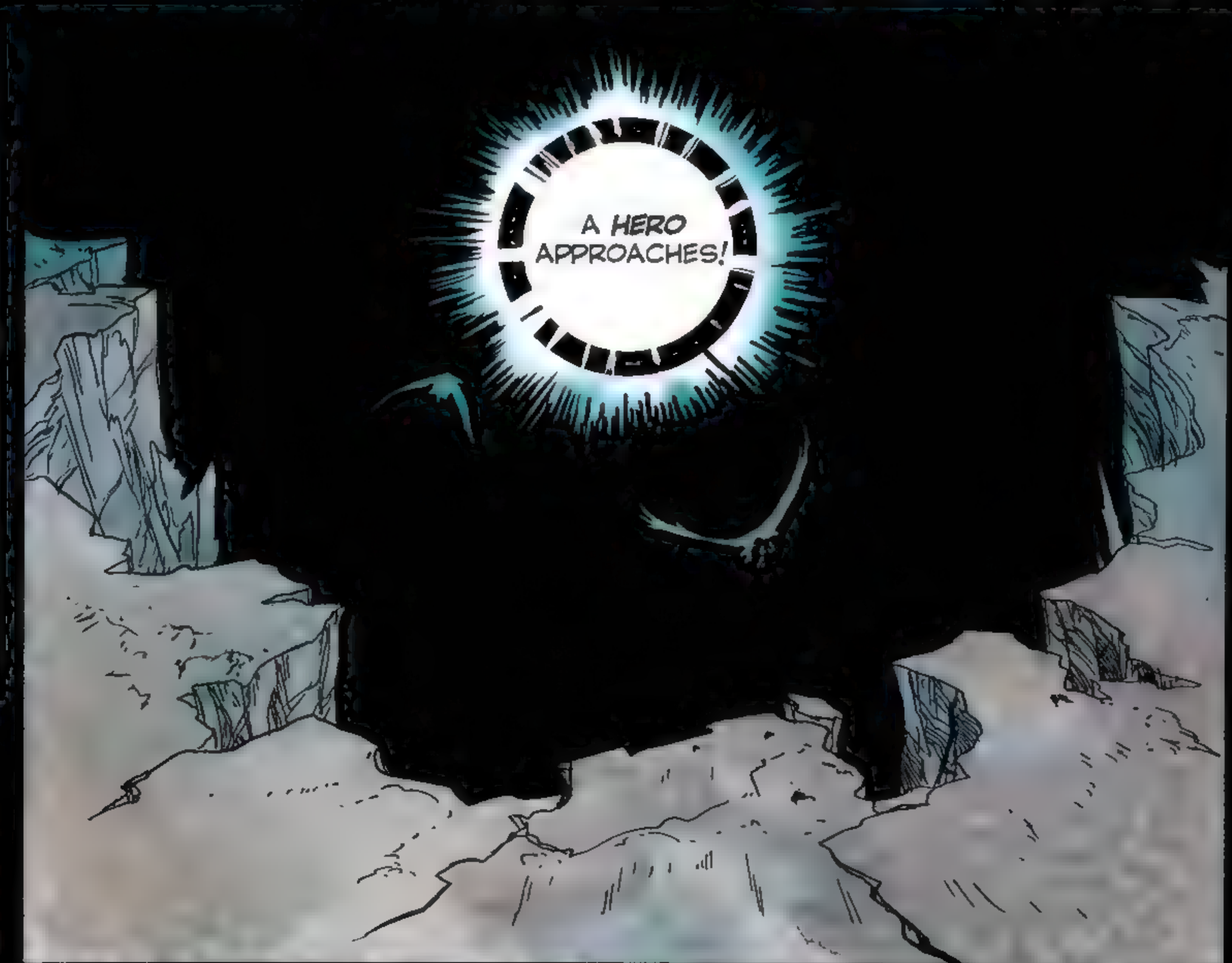
POWERLESS
GOD...

YOUR WIFE
WILL DIE FIRST.
AND I WILL SEE YOUR
END...IN THE NIGHT.
I WILL COME OUT OF THE
EARTH AND WITH THE
GOLD I WILL CORRUPT
WHAT'S LEFT OF
YOUR WORLD...

...AND
LOVE WILL
DIE.



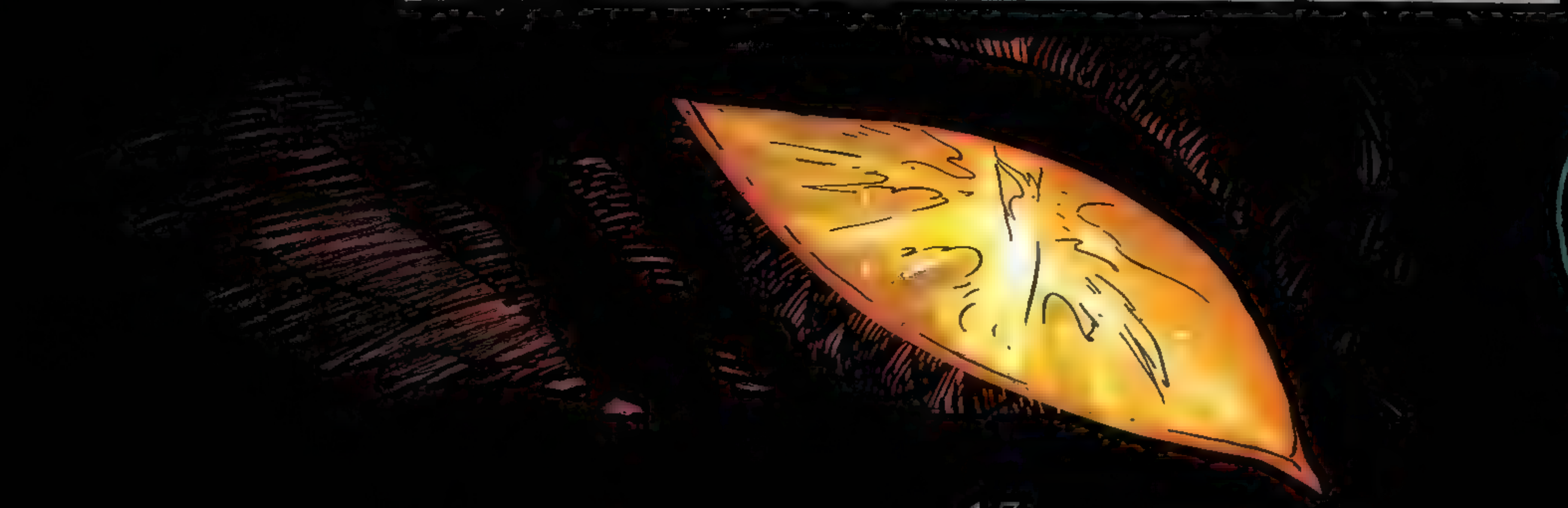
DRAGON
DO YOU
HEAR THE
MURMUR OF
THE WIND?



A HERO
APPROACHES!



A
CHILD...



I HUNGER
FOR HIM!

TWILIGHT OF THE

CRYSTAL
FORESTS,
SIEGFRIED!

QUARTZ PRAIRIES
UNDER AN
AMETHYST SKY...

...JUICY VEINS OF IRON
AND COPPER...YOU'LL
SEE, MIME'S CAVE IS
MUCH BETTER THAN
THE SURFACE!

NO RAIN,
NO STICKY SNOW,
NO HORRIBLE SUN—

NO GAME.

ALL YOU CAN
THINK ABOUT
IS *FOOD*!

YOU SHOULD
TALK. ISN'T THAT
YOUR STOMACH
THAT I HEAR ALL
THE WAY OVER
HERE?



IT'S THE
WATERFALL!

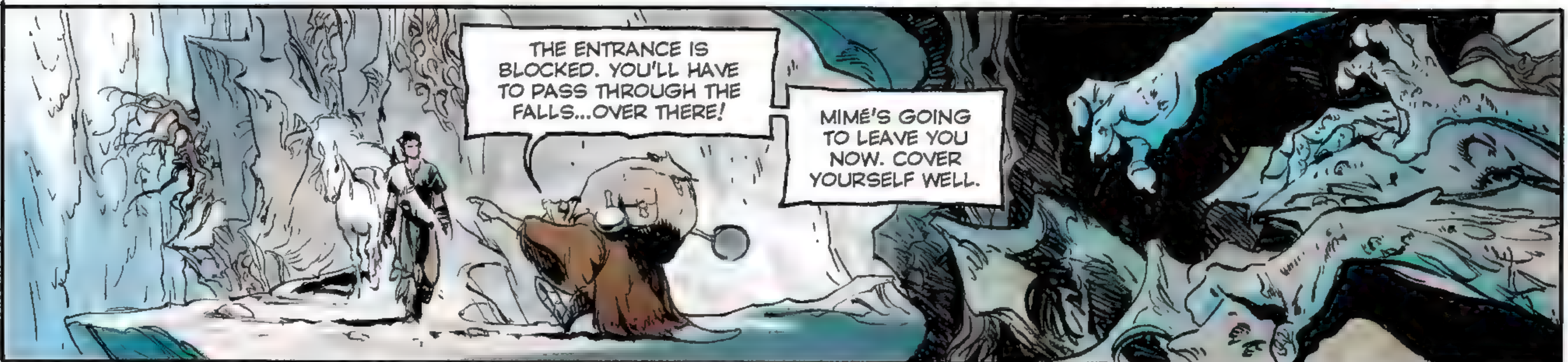
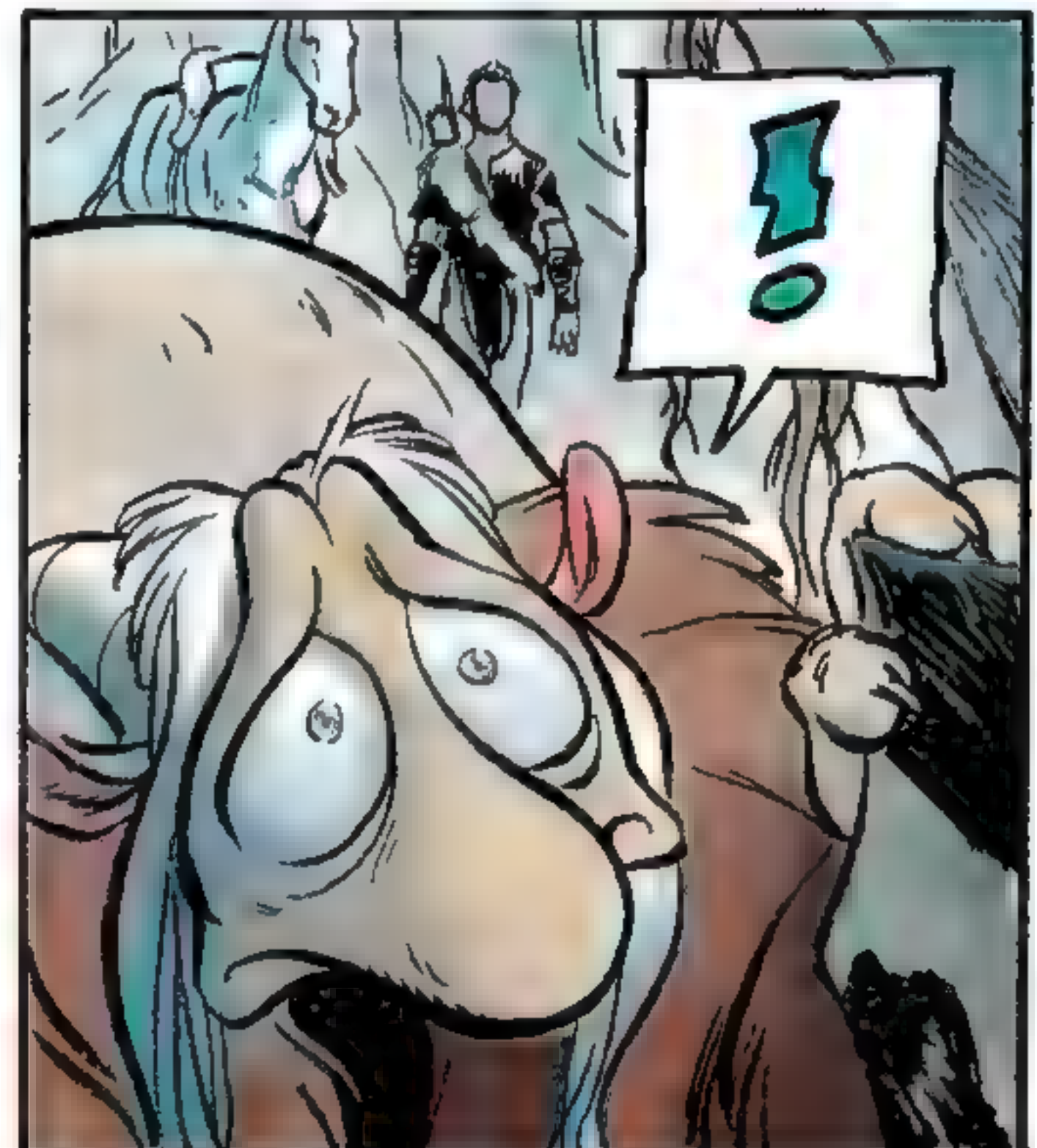
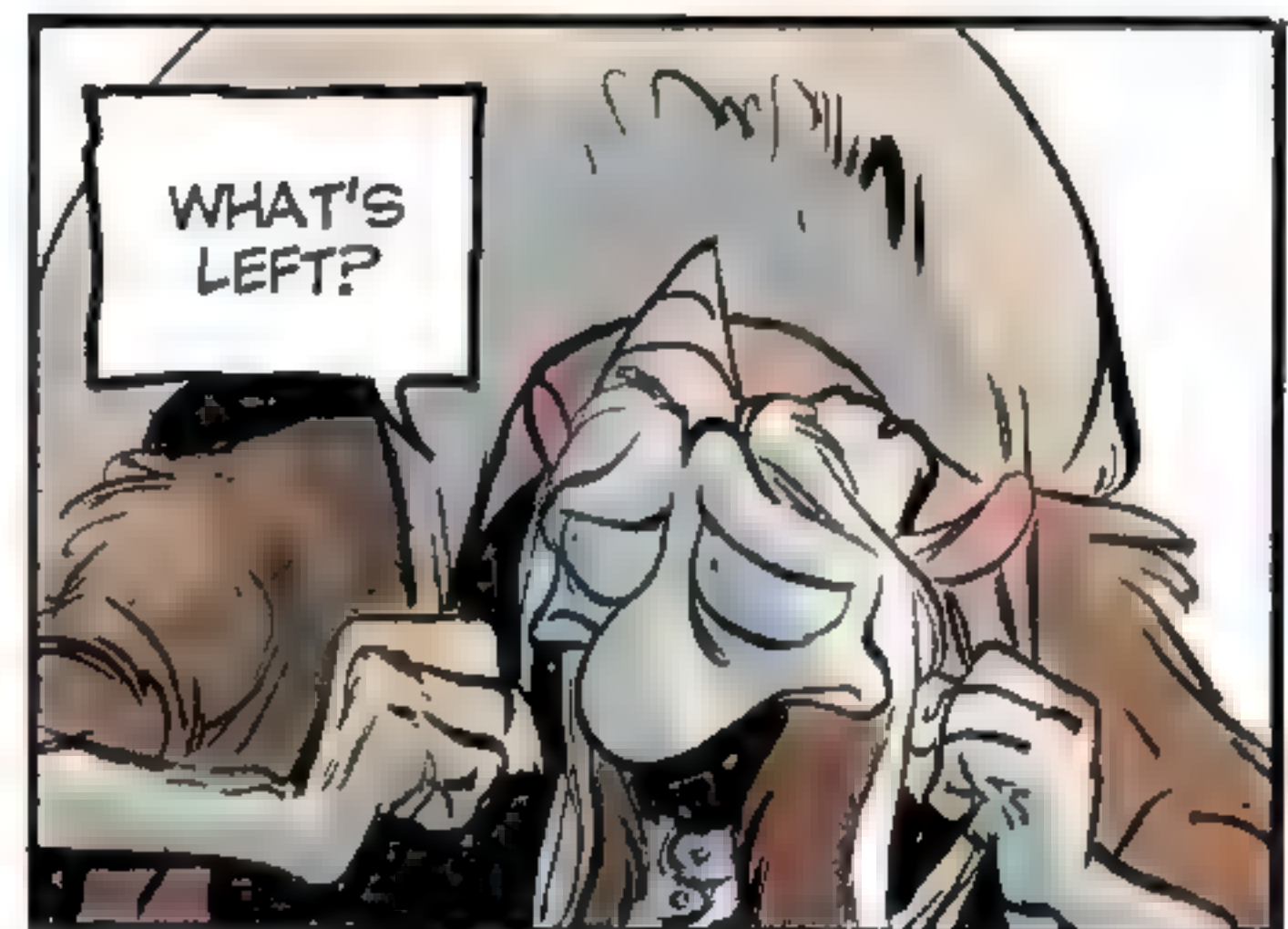
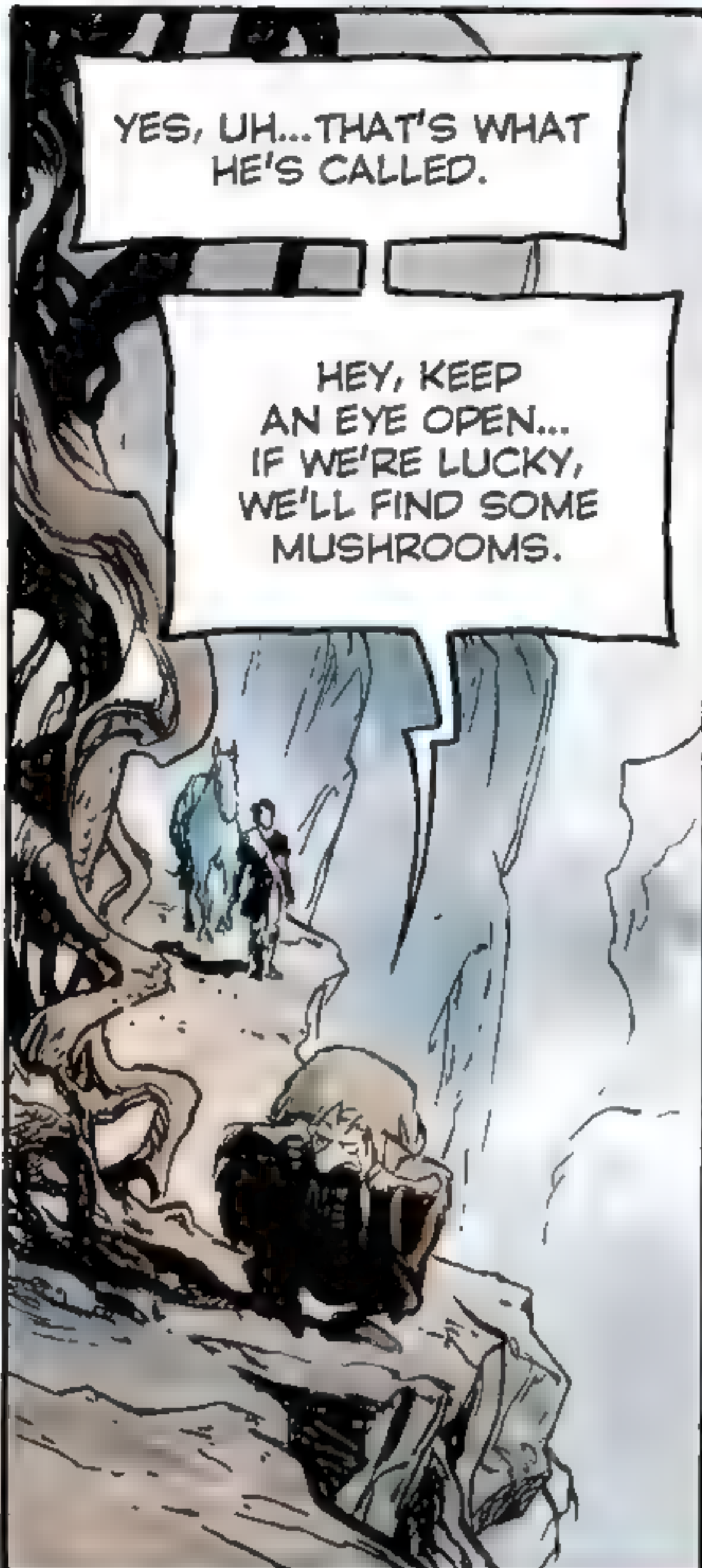
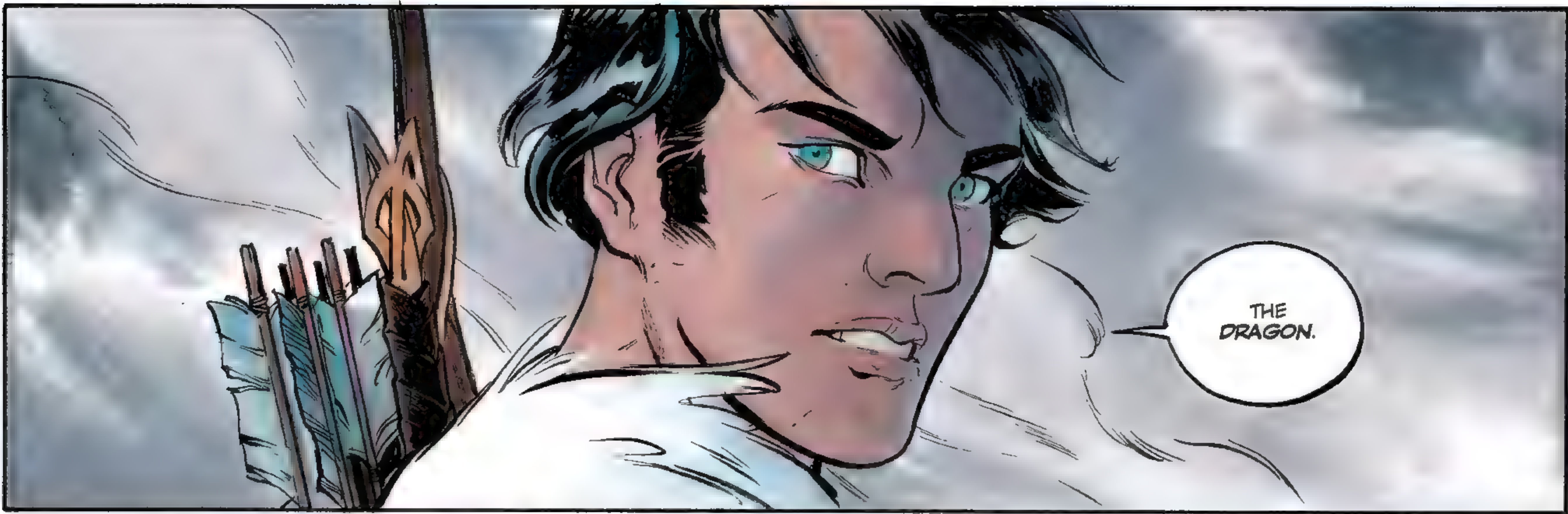
THIS ENTRANCE HAS
COLLAPSED AS WELL...
THERE IS ONE MORE TO TRY,
AFTER THAT...WE'LL HAVE TO
GO THROUGH THE FALLS!

THE EARTH
HAS SHAKEN
HERE IN THE
LAND OF FOG!

THE
GIANTS?

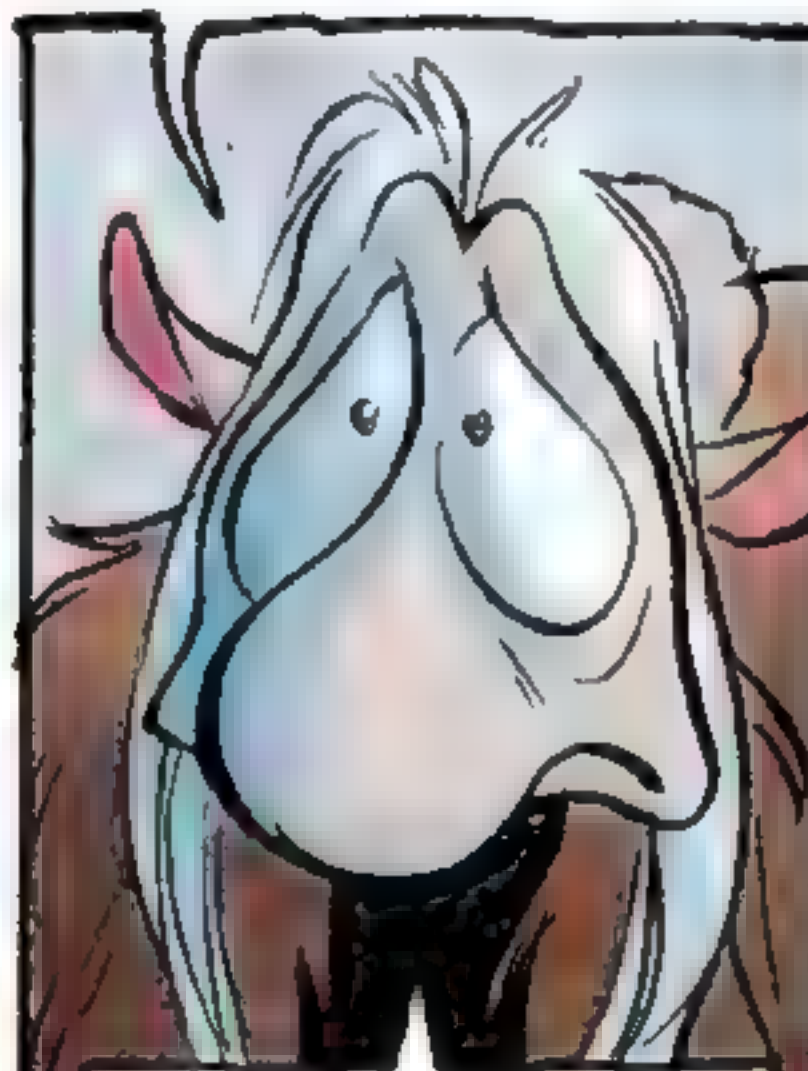
OOOH NO,
THE GIANTS DON'T
COME HERE ANYMORE...
THEY KNOW WHAT'S
BENEATH THE CITY
OF FOG...



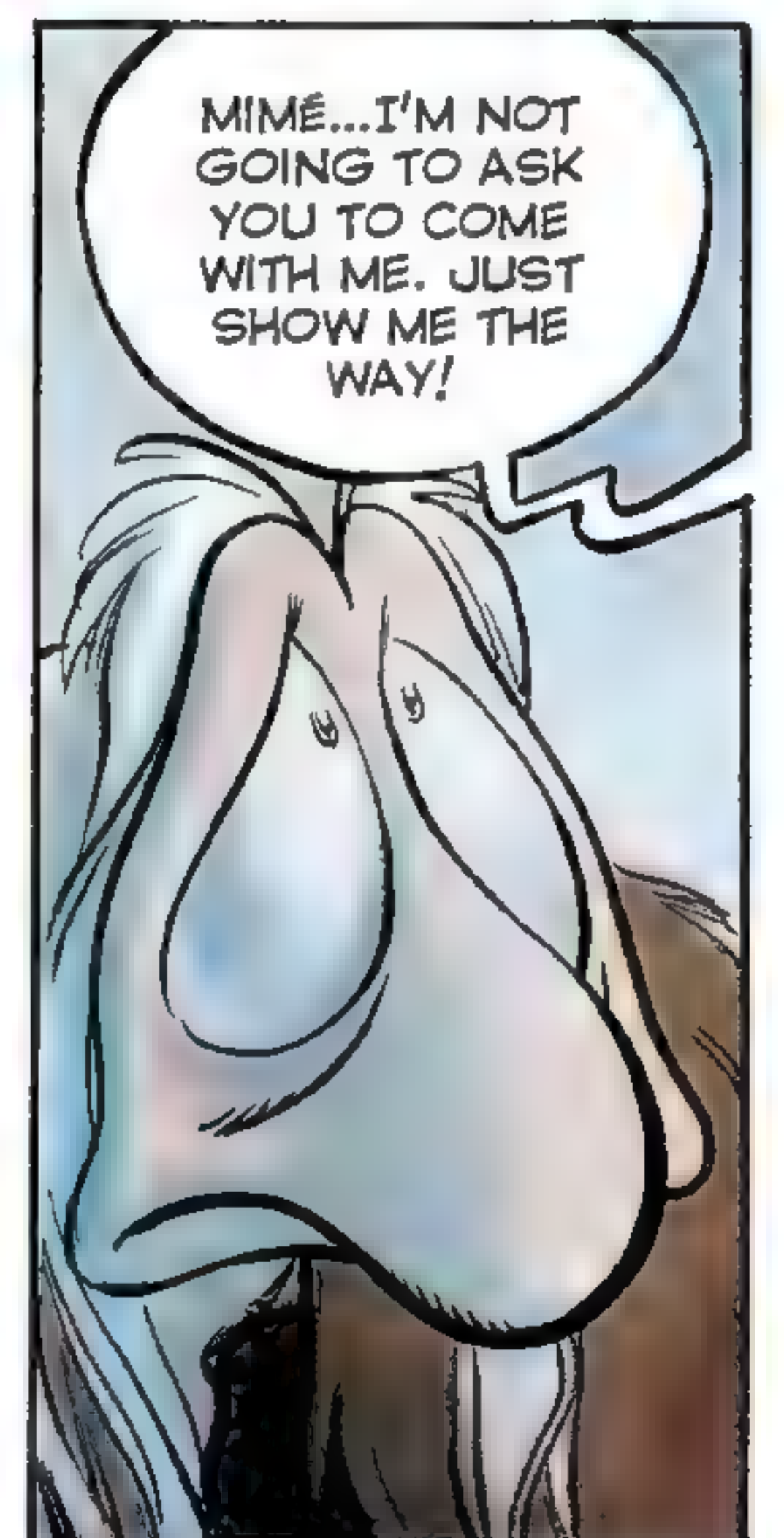




IF HE CAN COMMAND THE FOG HE CAN DO ANYTHING!



YOU MUSTN'T CONFRONT HIM, SIEGFRIED! HE IS INVINCIBLE!



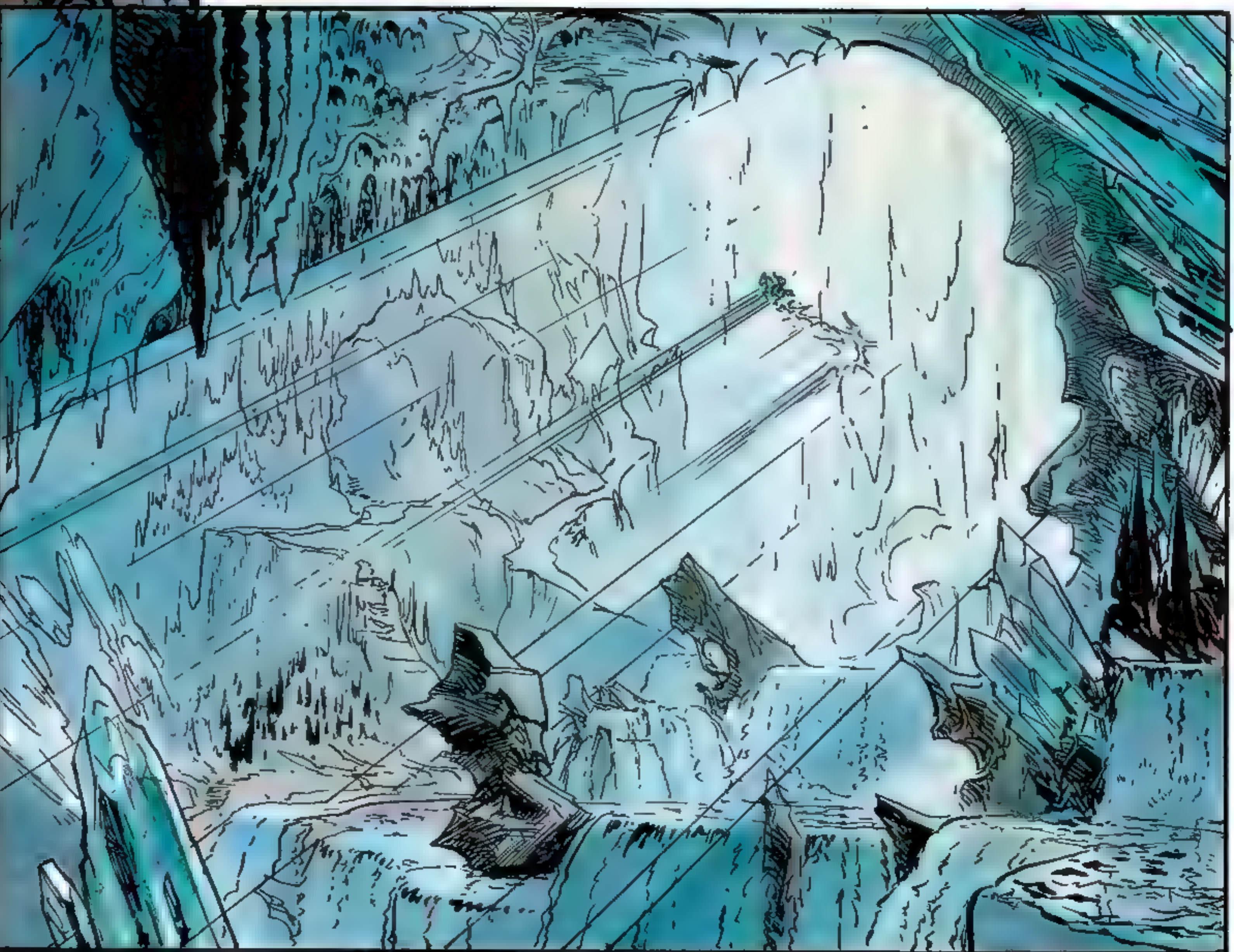
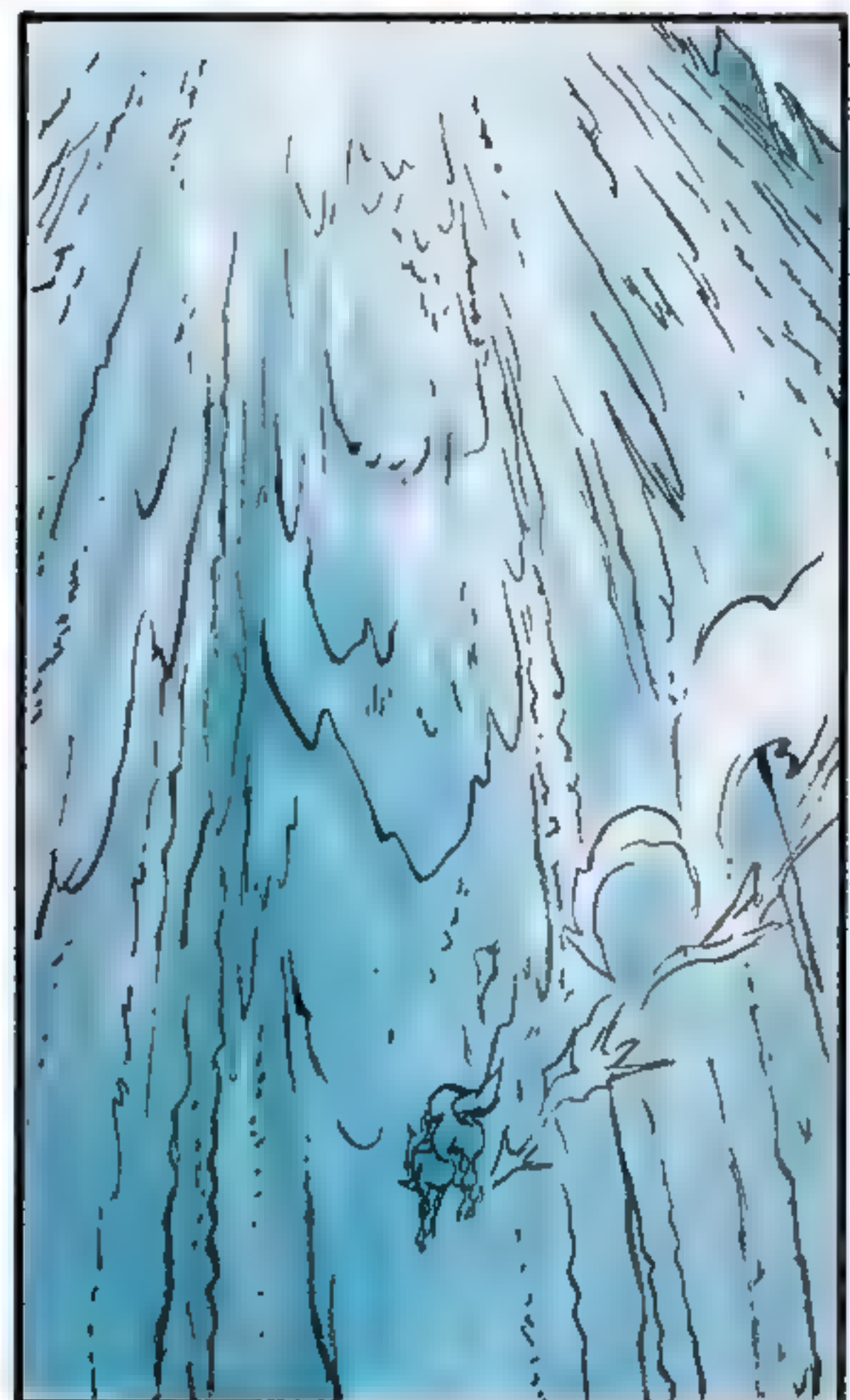
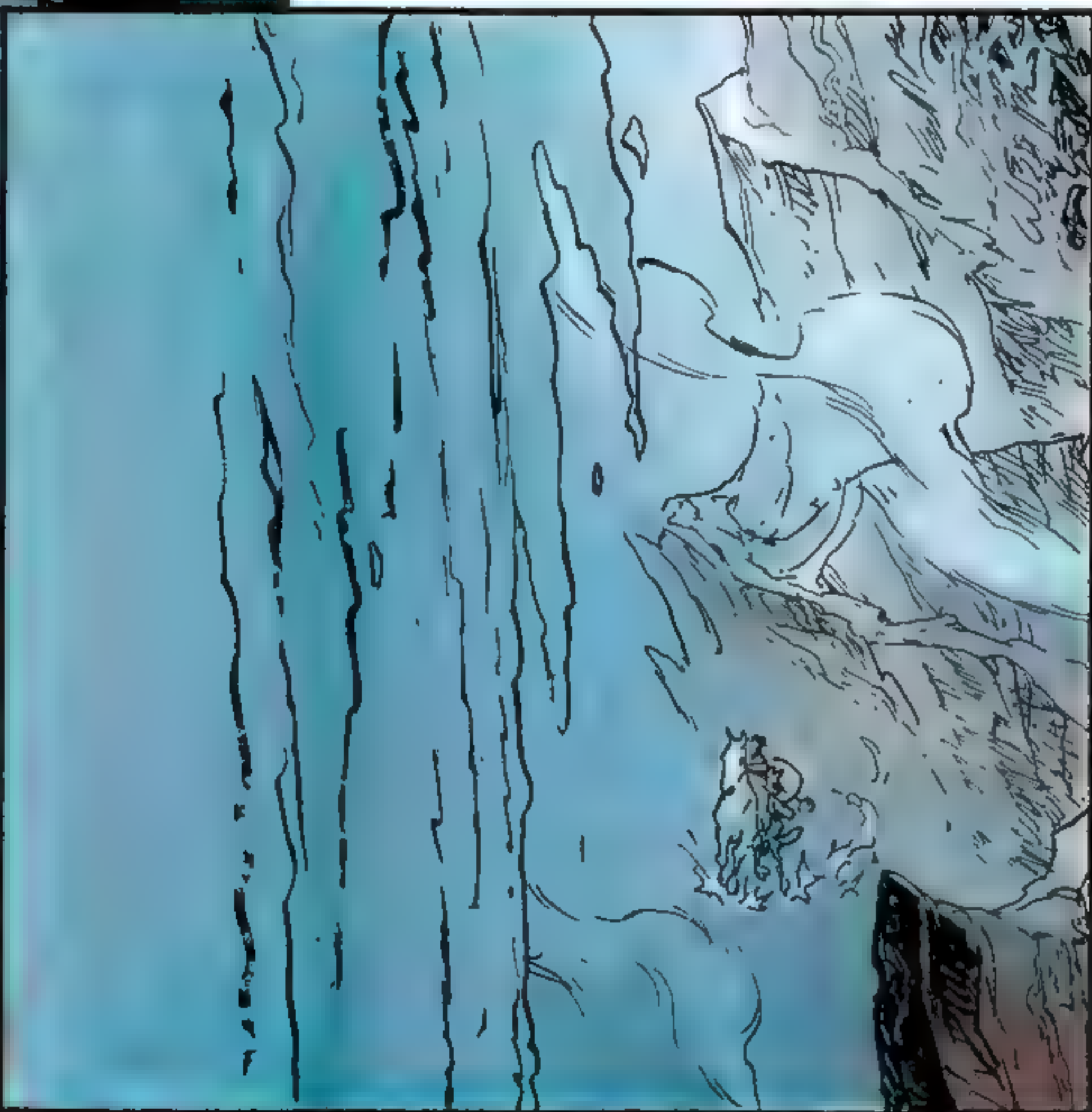
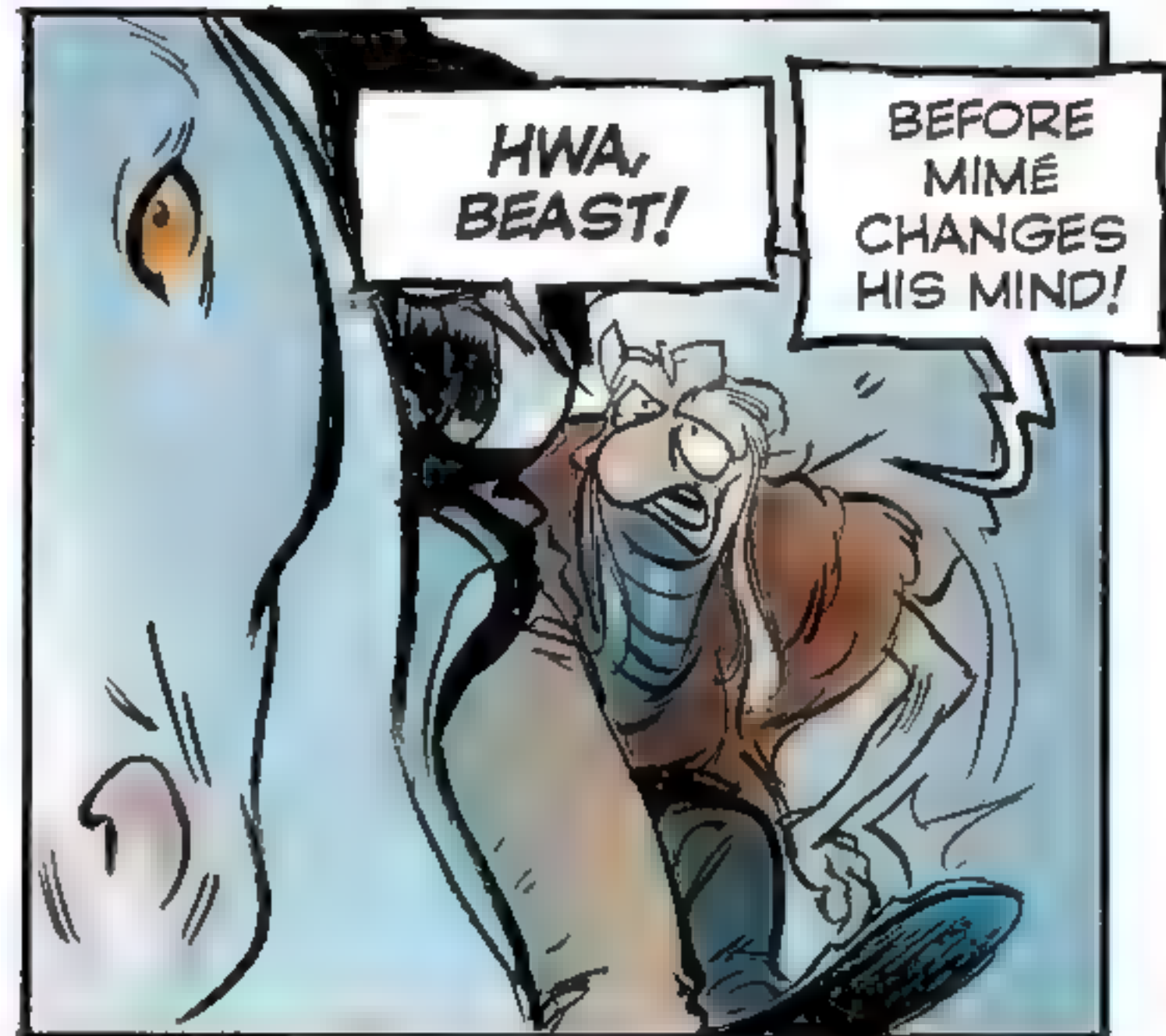
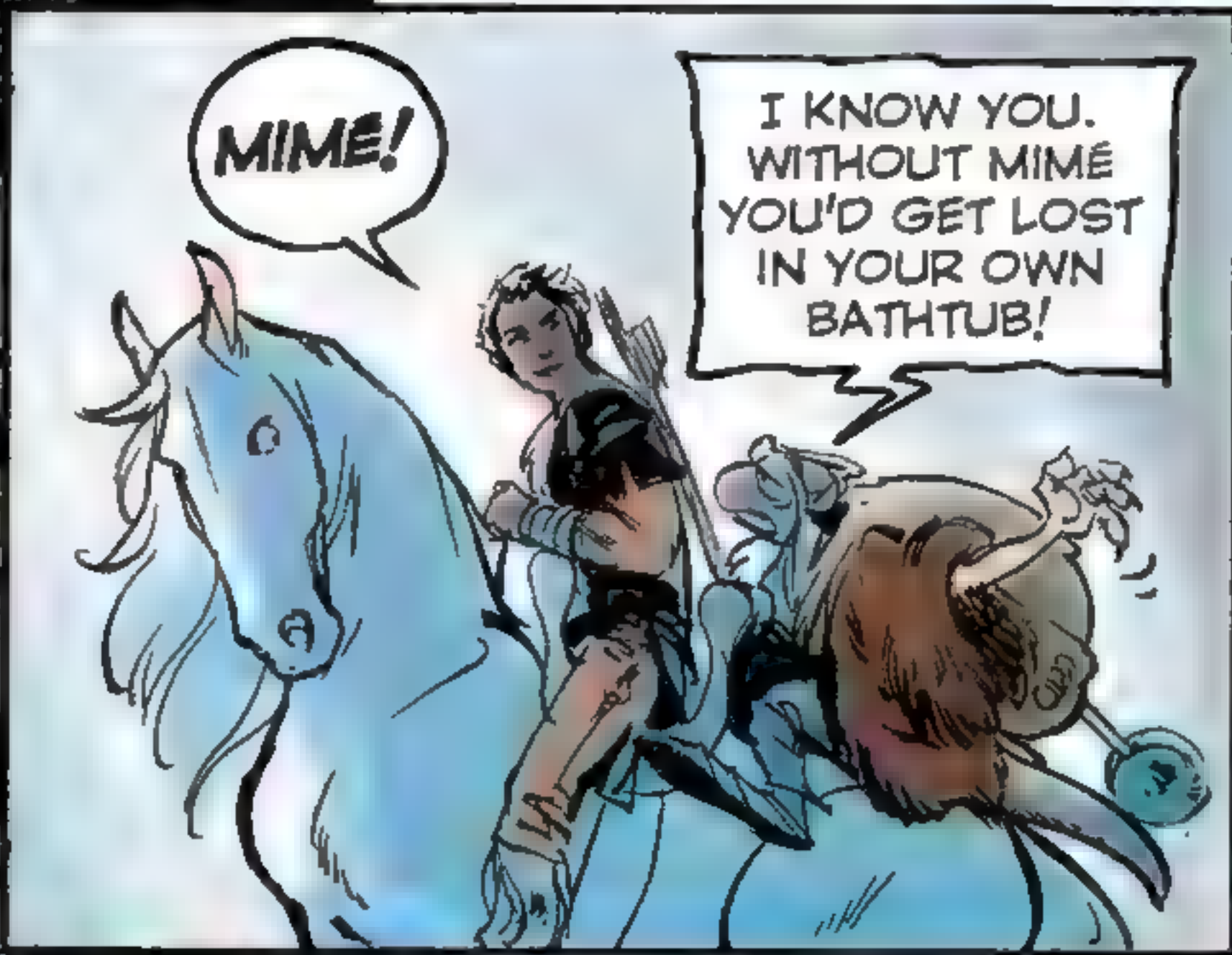
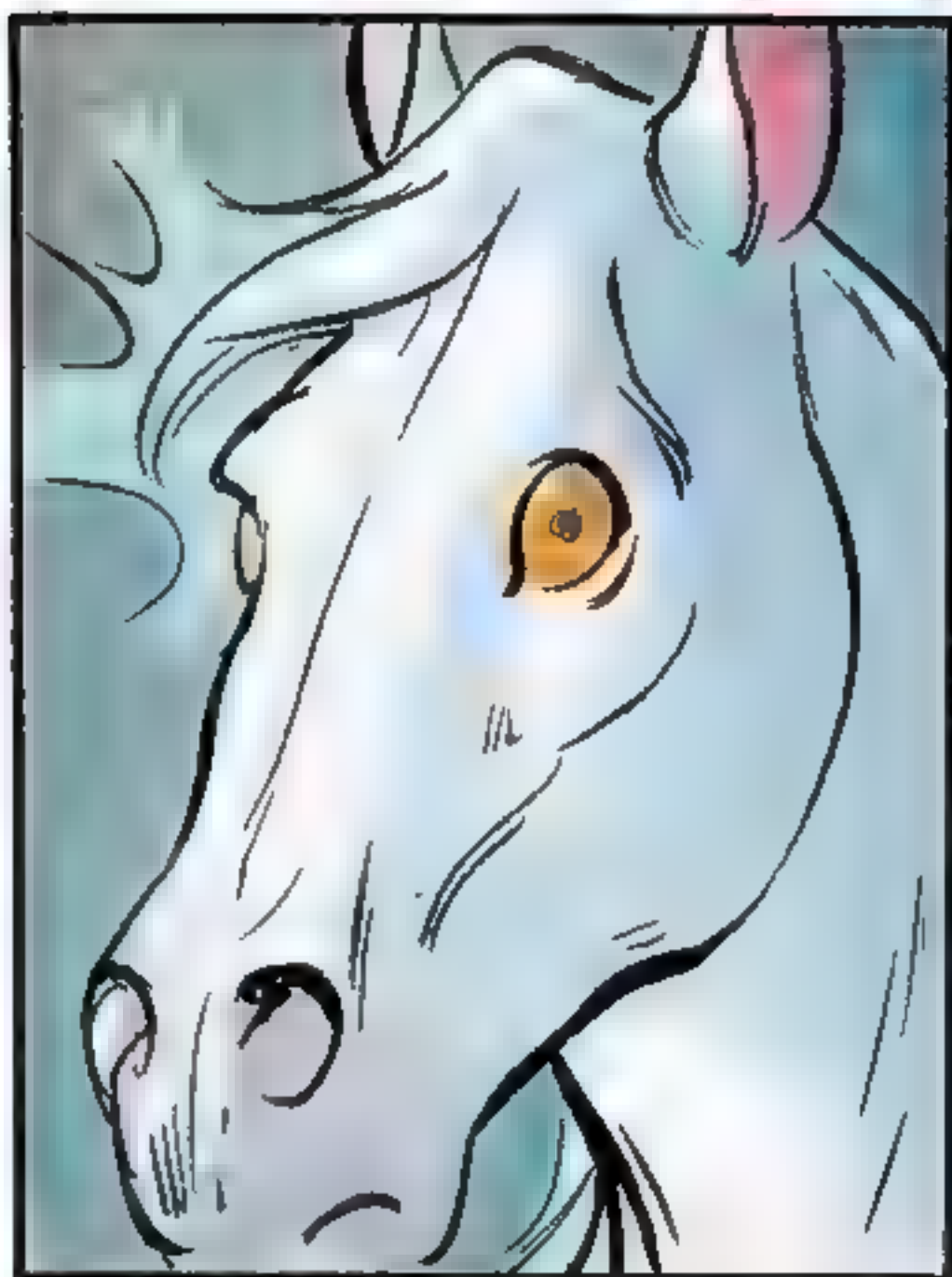
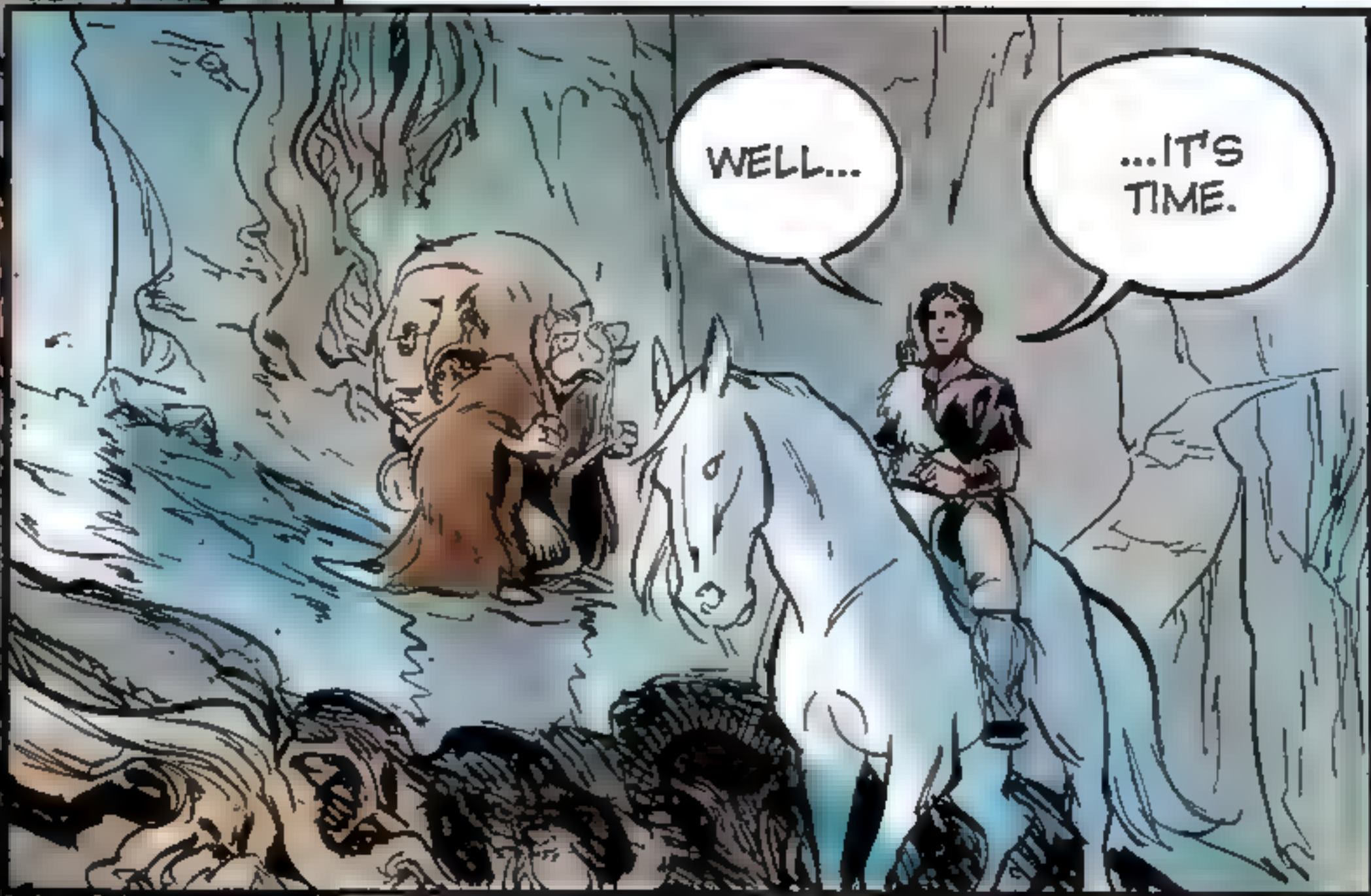
ALL THE WAY IN THE BACK. BEHIND THE FALLS... THAT'S WHERE THE CITY BEGINS...

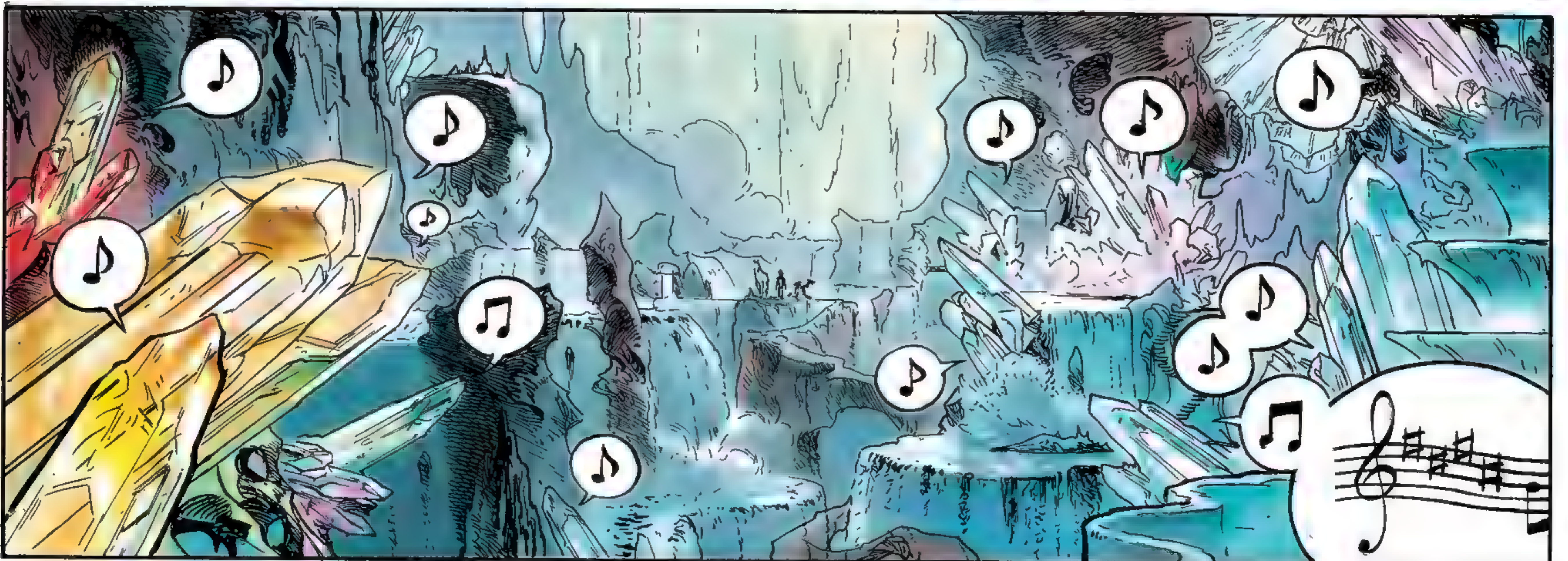
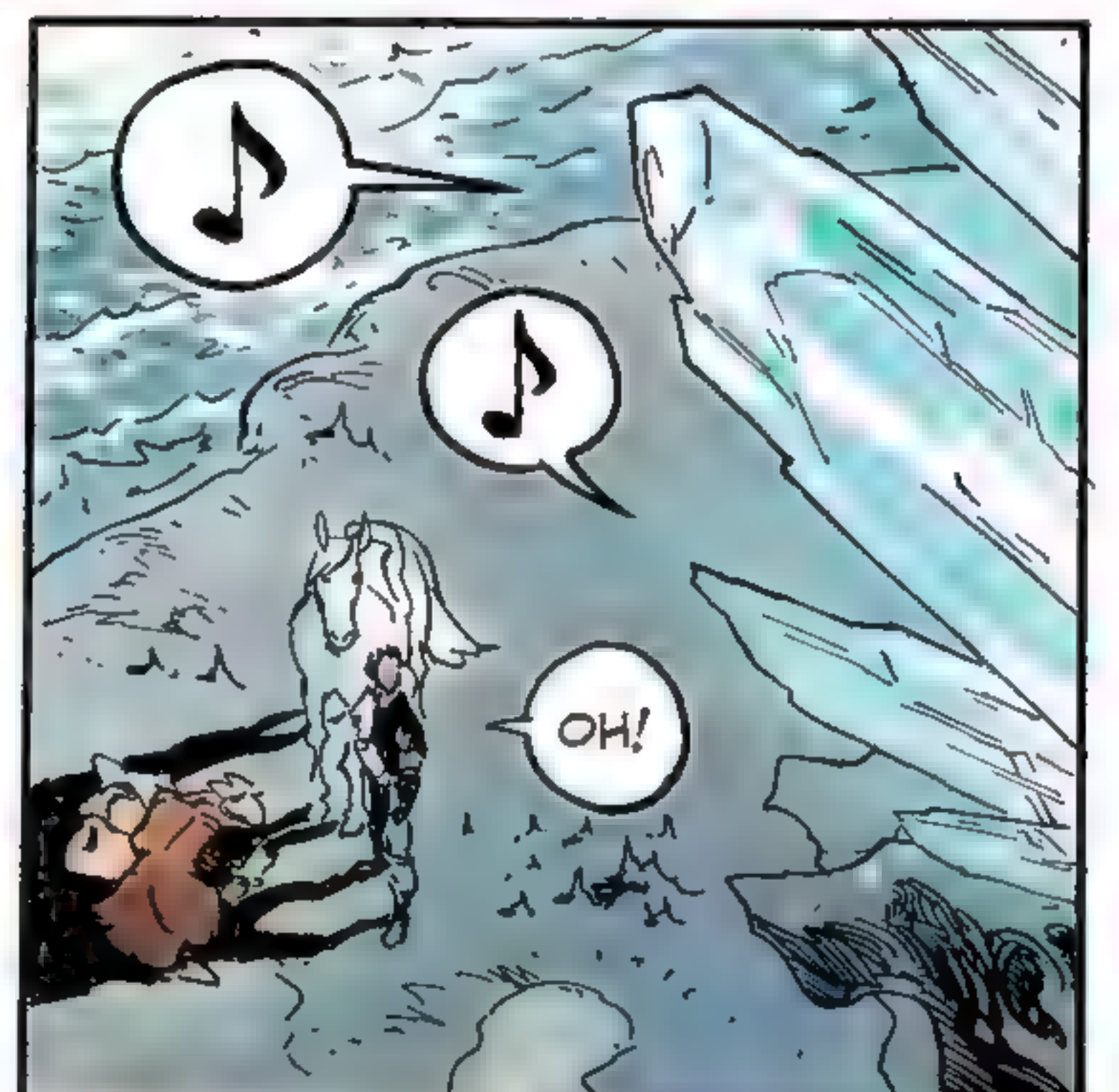
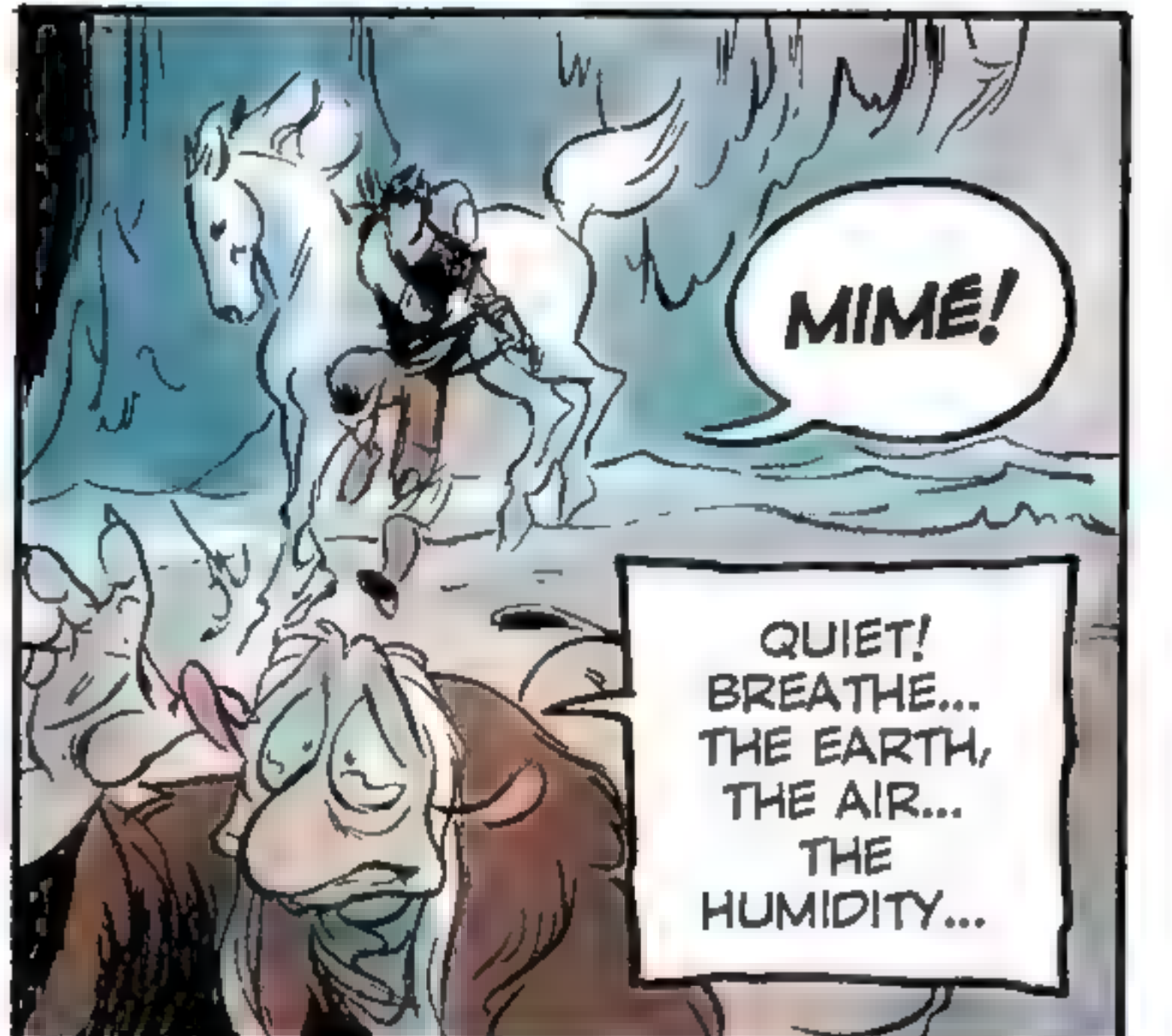
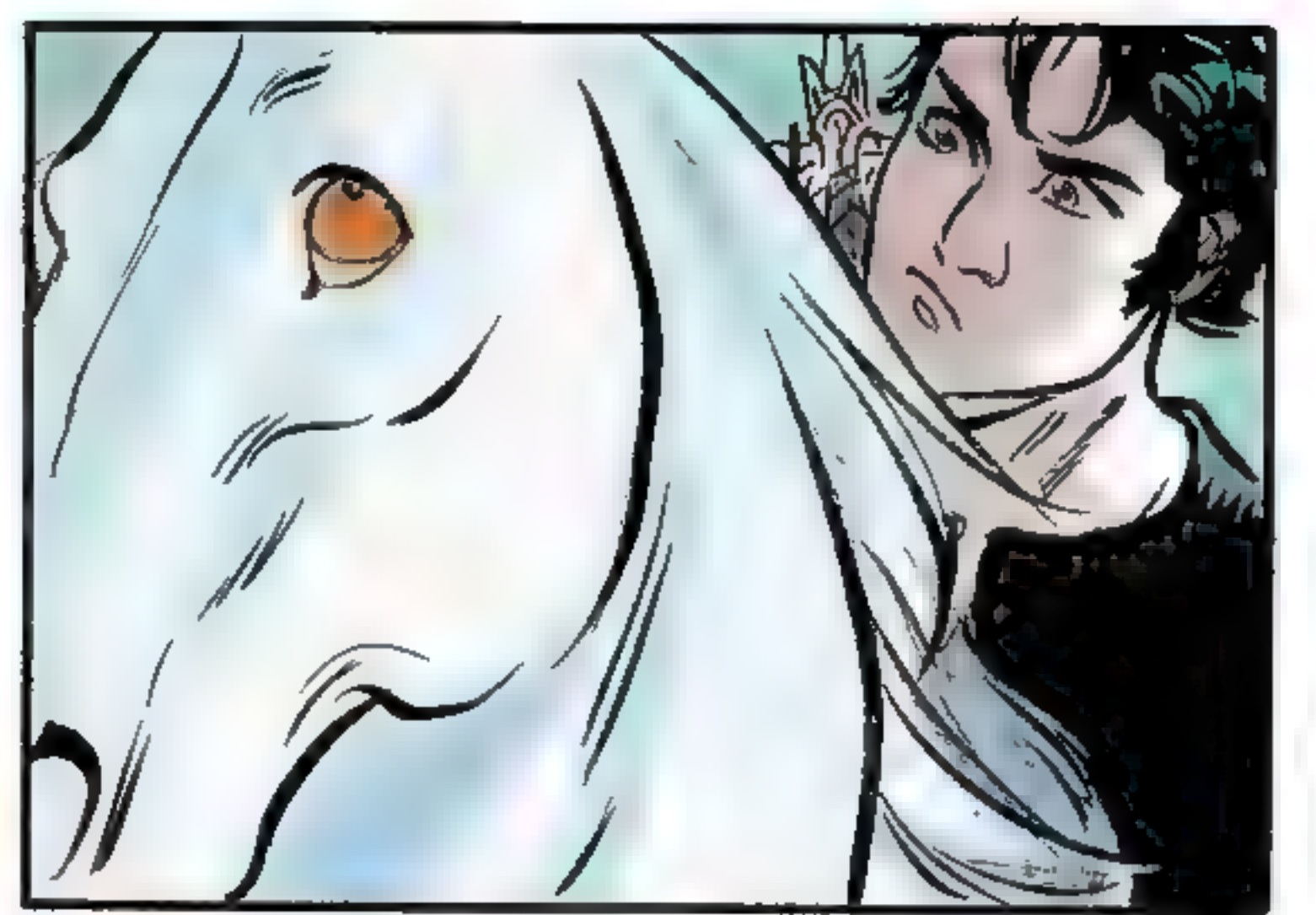
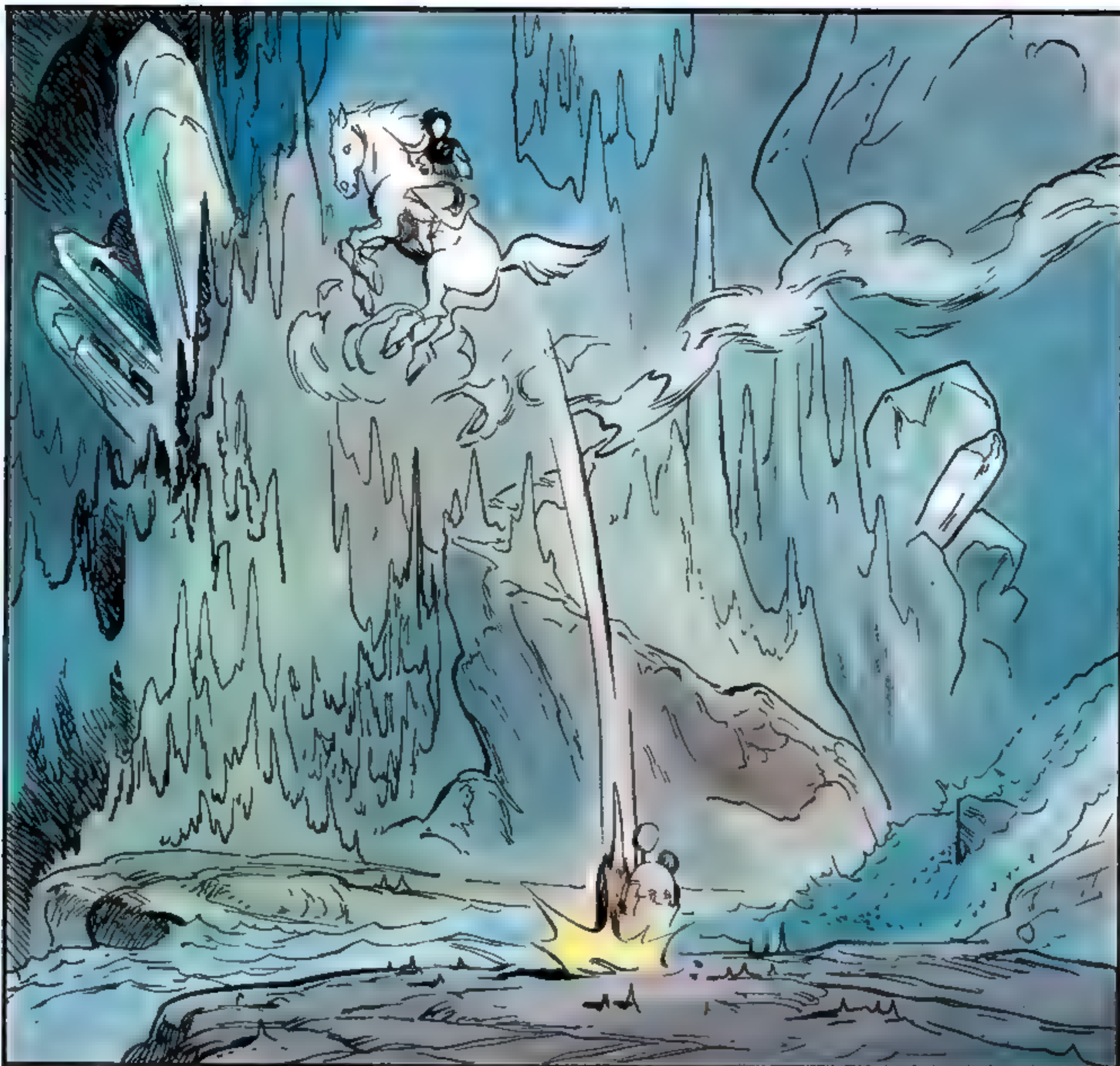
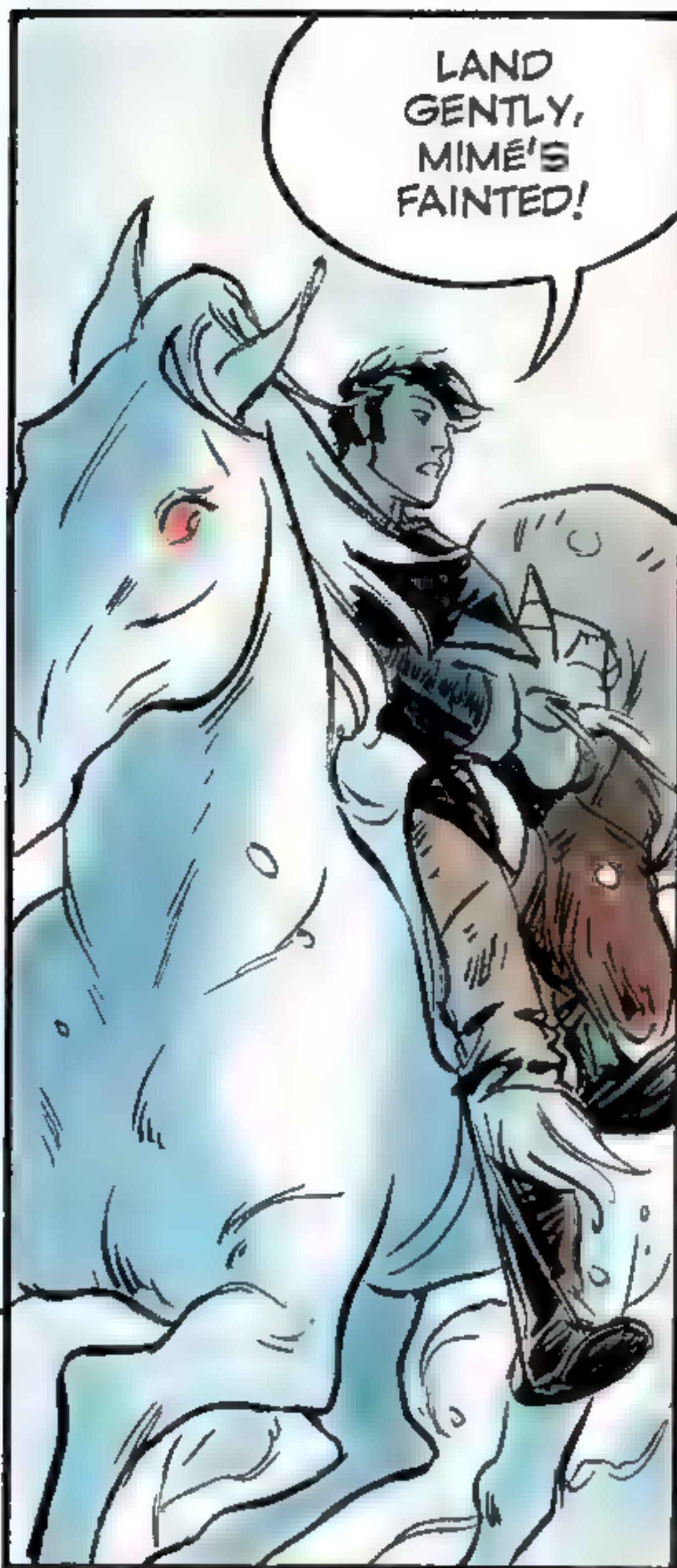
FOLLOW THE WATER DOWN AND YOU WILL FIND THE PALACE OF FOG.

THERE'S A CIRCULAR STAIRCASE THAT WILL TAKE YOU TO THE THRONE ROOM...

...AND THERE YOU WILL FIND A CRACK THAT PLUNGES INTO THE ABYSS.

THAT'S WHERE YOU WILL FIND FAFNIR.





MY CAVE!

MY ORE!

MY FORGE!

MY...

UH... MIMÉ?

A BIG BOWL OF RUSSULA STEW! YOU'LL LOVE IT!

AND FOR HIM?

HE SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT HIS DISH!

LOOK, A SPOTTED PHILOTA!

VERY RARE THIS FAR DOWN! THAT ONE MIMÉ IS GOING TO KEEP FOR HIMSELF FOR HIS REFINED PALETTE.

CHOMP

CHOMP CHOMP

HAMMER.

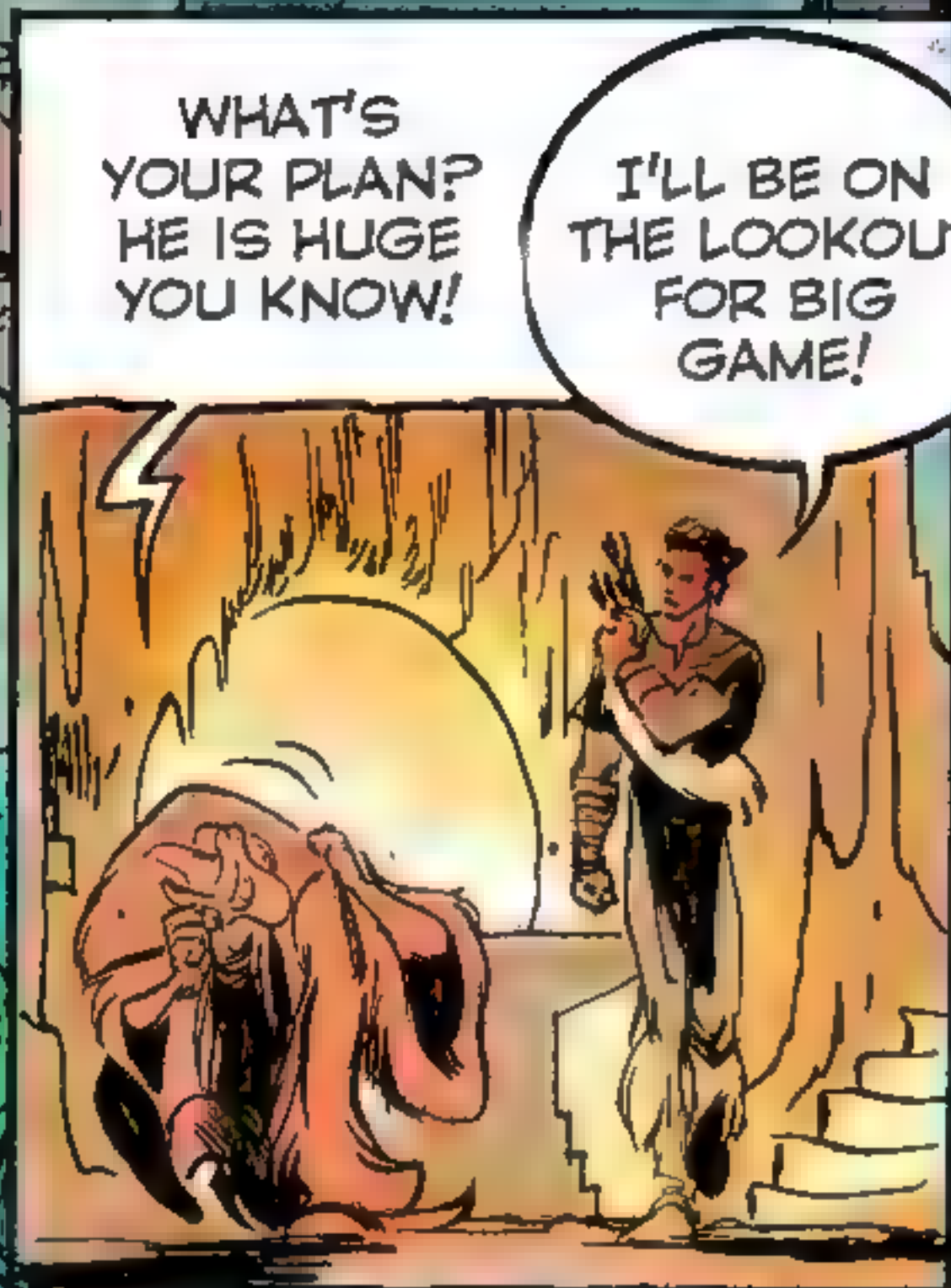
OH LEAVE HIM ALONE, AT LEAST HE APPRECIATES YOUR COOKING!

MF!

IT'S STRANGE THE DRAGON SMELL IS NOT AS STRONG AS IT WAS BEFORE... AS THOUGH HE BURIED HIMSELF DEEPER.

WHAT'S DOWN THERE?

THEY SAY THERE IS A BRIDGE...BUT NO NIBELUNG HAS EVER GONE THAT FAR... EVEN FAFNIR WAS NOT ABLE TO GO THERE!



WHAT'S YOUR PLAN? HE IS HUGE YOU KNOW!

I'LL BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR BIG GAME!

YOUR SWORD IS SOLID, BUT TAKE CARE...ITS SKIN IS LIKE IRON, ITS BLOOD HAS STRANGE POWERS... AND HE BREATHES OUT ICE!

HE REALLY HAS NO WEAKNESSES?

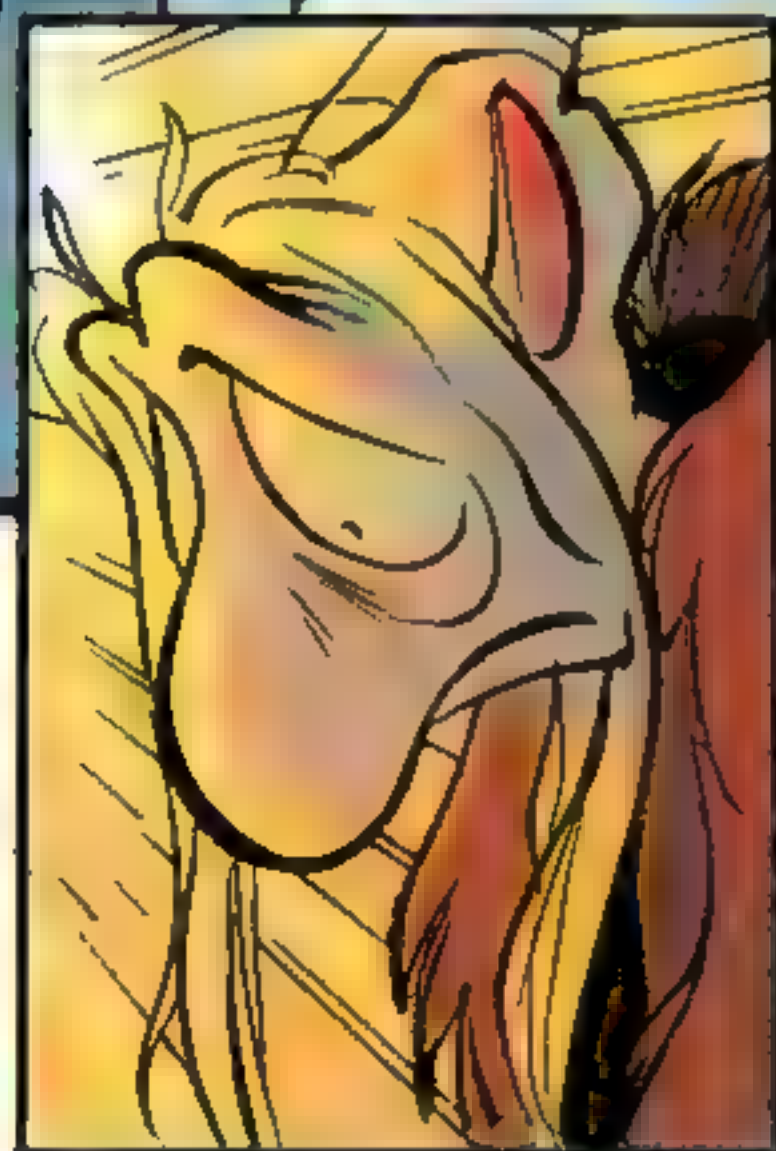


HE'S VAIN...

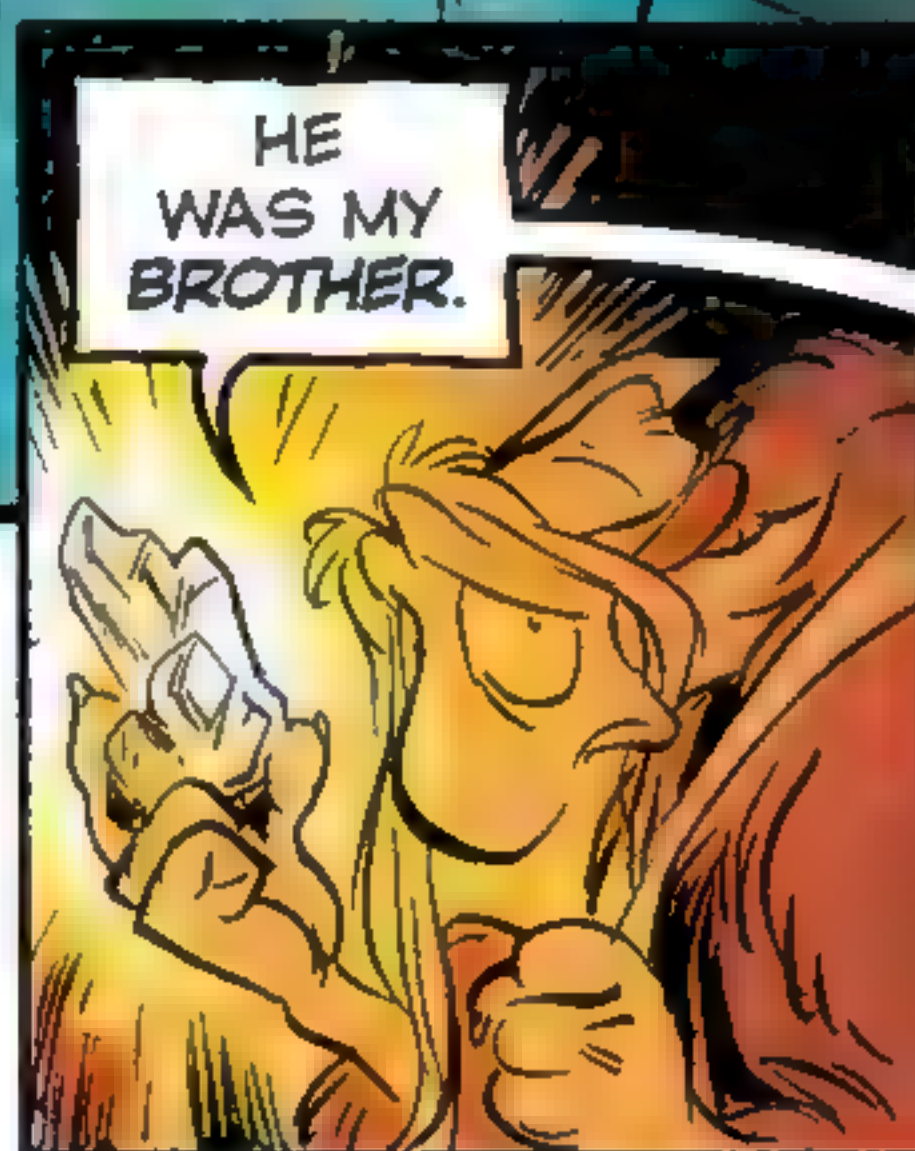


AND OF COURSE, IF YOU GET HIM OUT OF THE FOG, THE SUN WILL TURN HIM TO STONE!

BUT HE'S NOT A NIBELUNG!



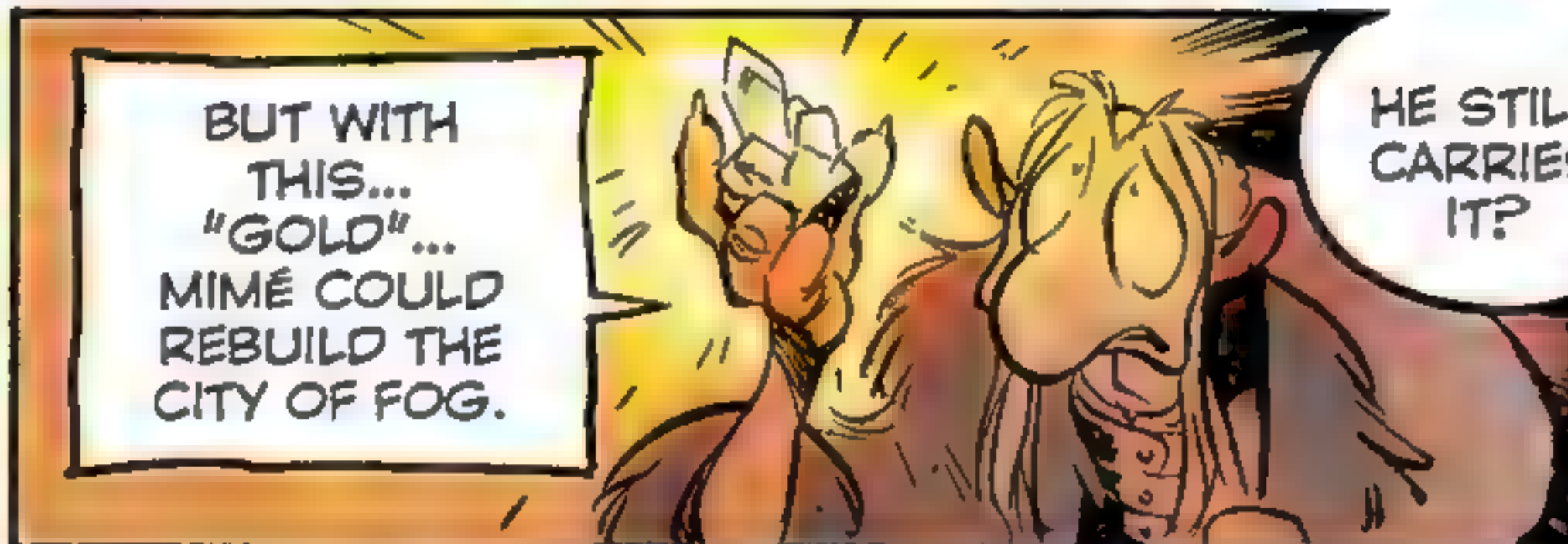
MIMÉ?



HE WAS MY BROTHER.

HE FOUND A METAL... AWFUL LIKE THE SUN... THE GREATEST OF ALL BLACKSMITHS SHAPED IT FOR HIM... SO HE CHANGED INTO A MONSTER...

...AND HE WASTED IT ALL.

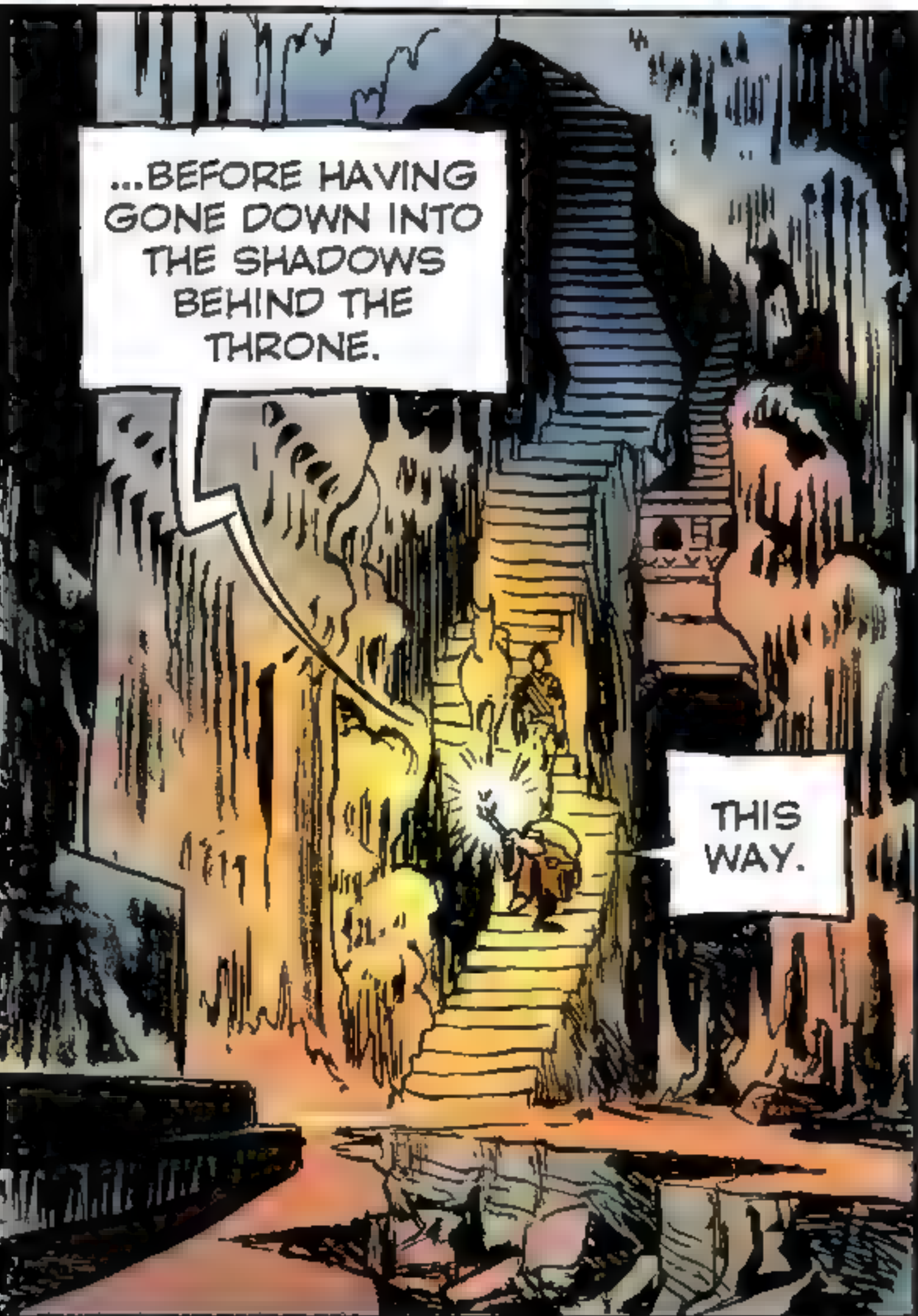


BUT WITH THIS... "GOLD"... MIMÉ COULD REBUILD THE CITY OF FOG.

HE STILL CARRIES IT?



HE'S PROBABLY EATEN IT LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE...



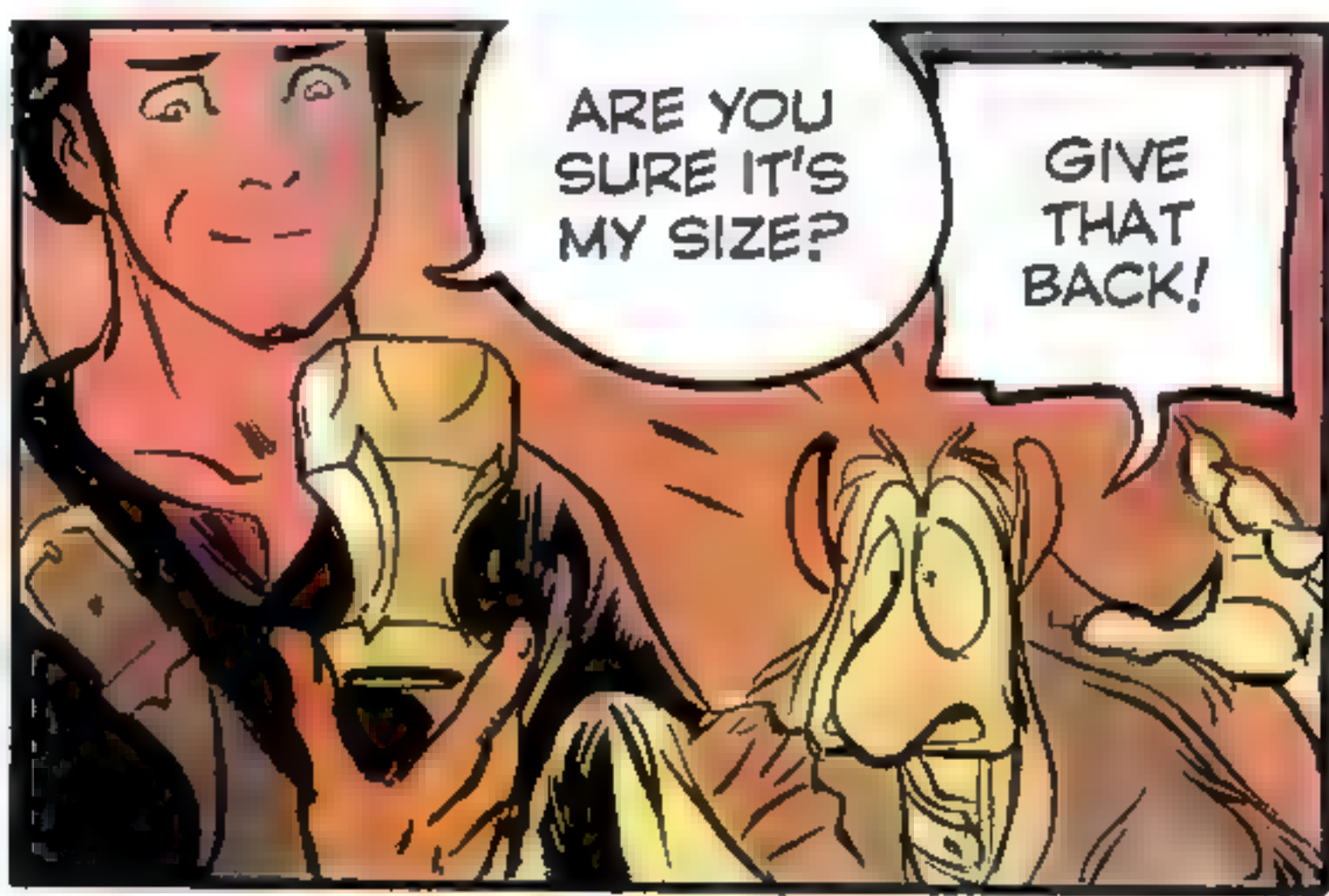
...BEFORE HAVING GONE DOWN INTO THE SHADOWS BEHIND THE THRONE.

THIS WAY.



THIS TIME MIMÉ IS NOT GOING TO GO ANY FURTHER! BUT TAKE THIS, IT'S FOR YOU!

TO COVER YOUR FRAGILE SKULL!

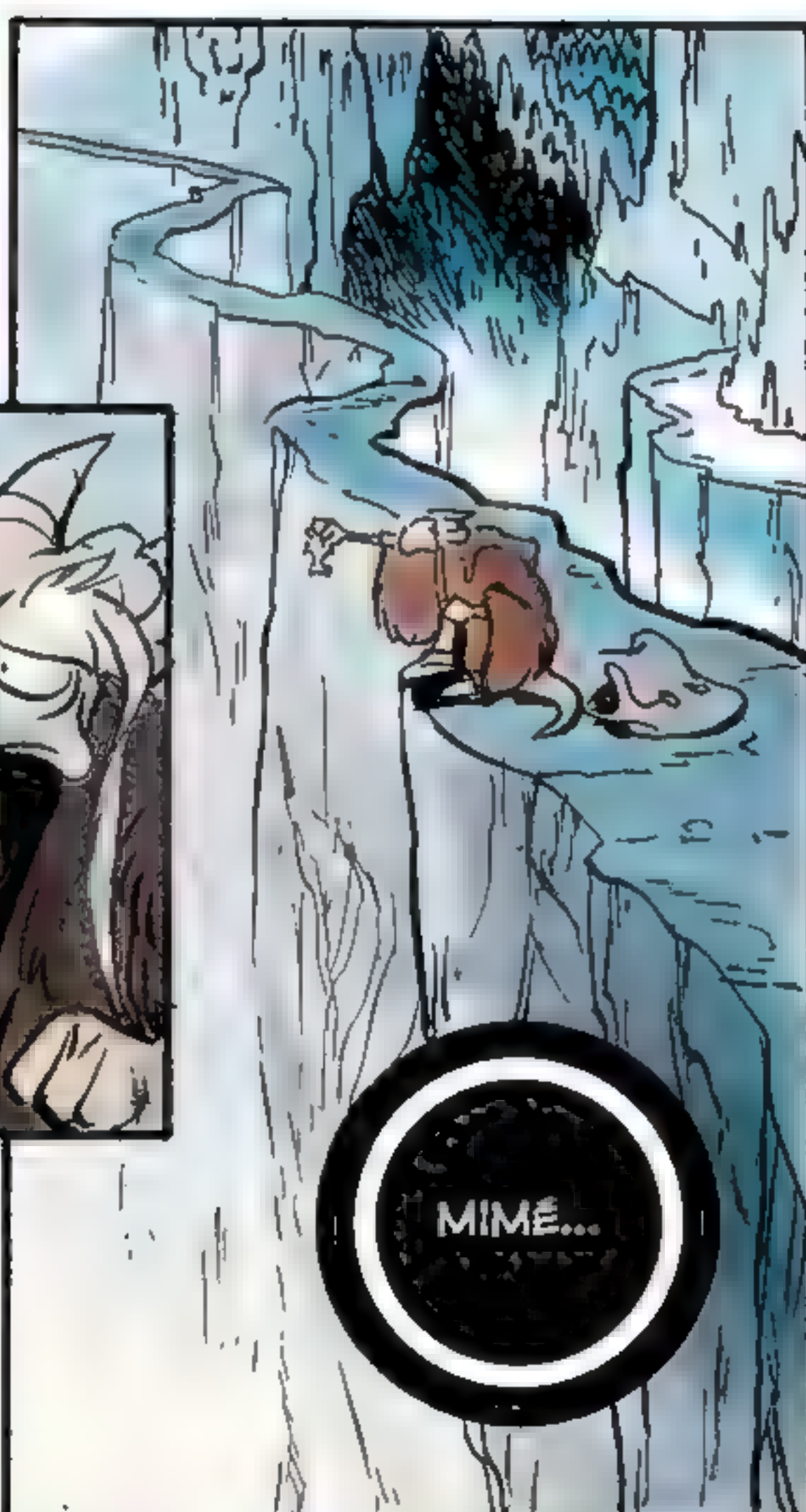
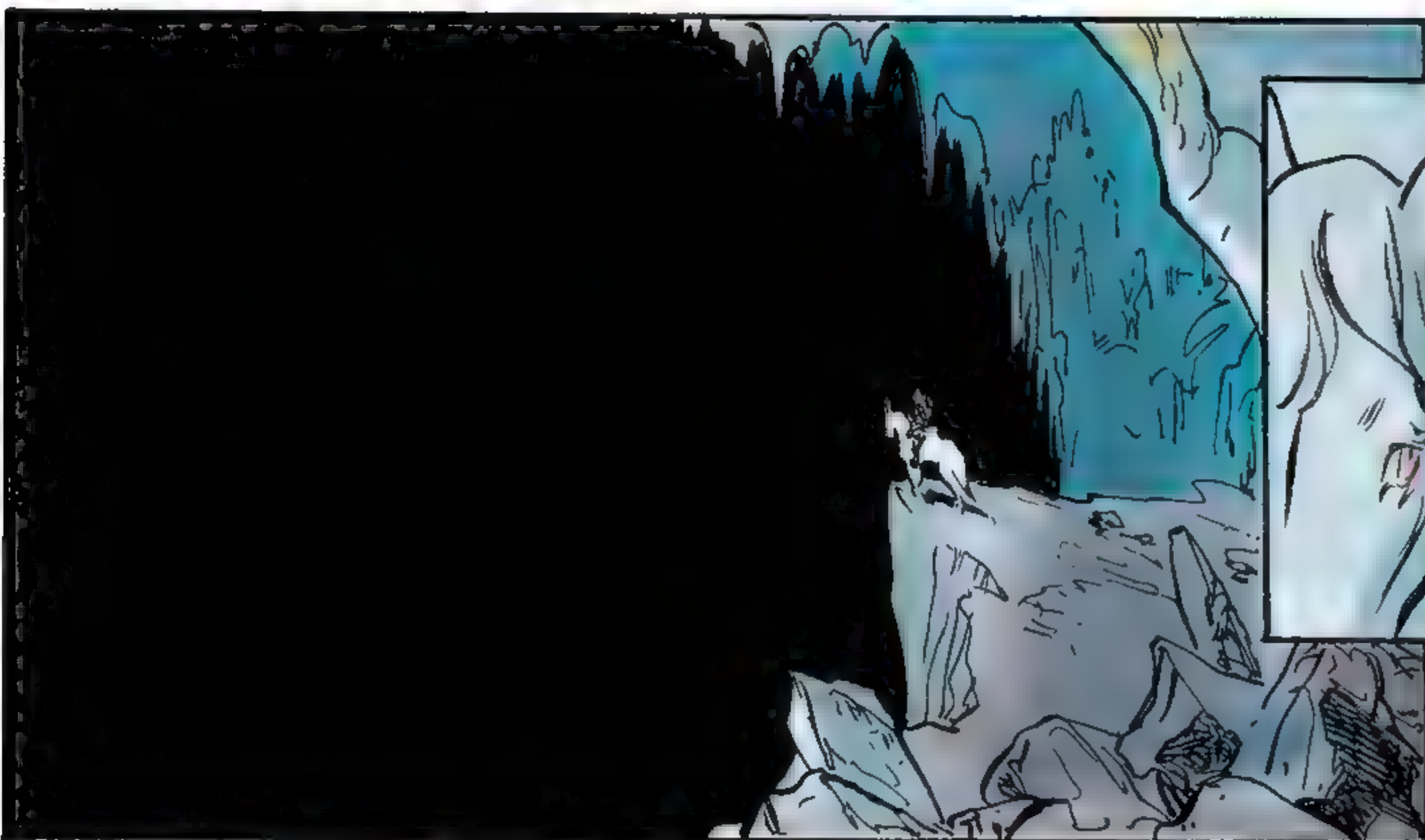
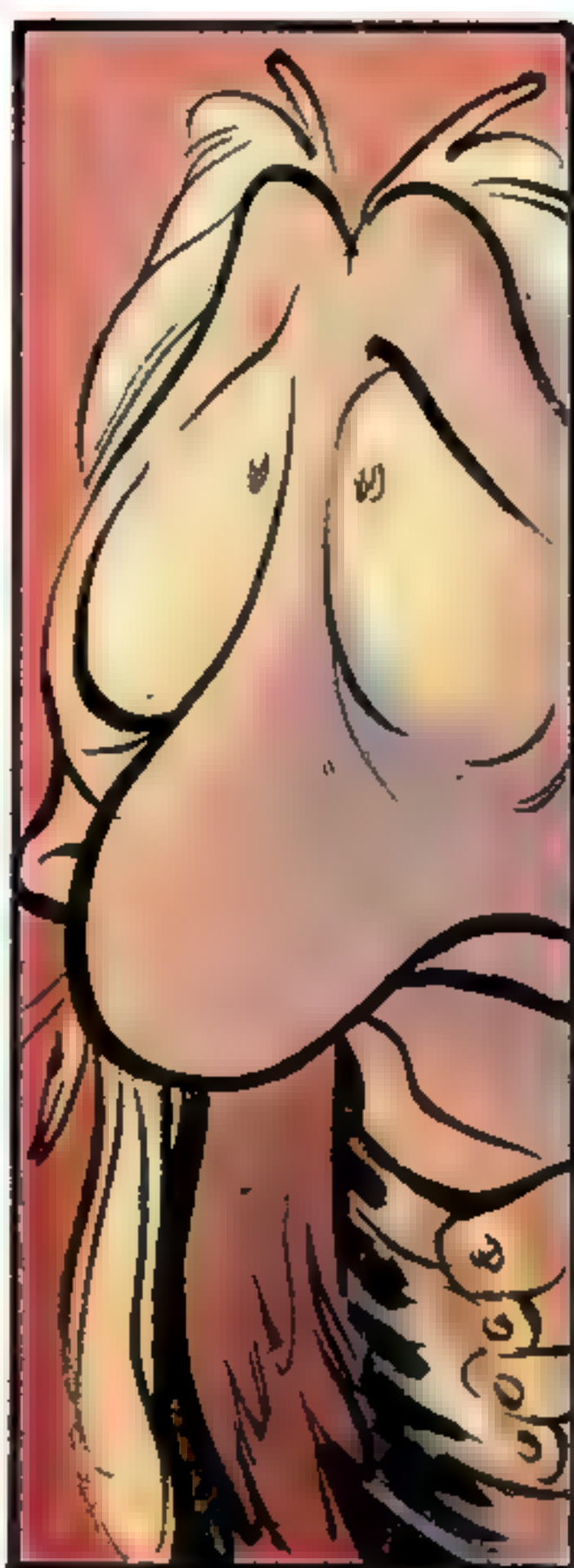


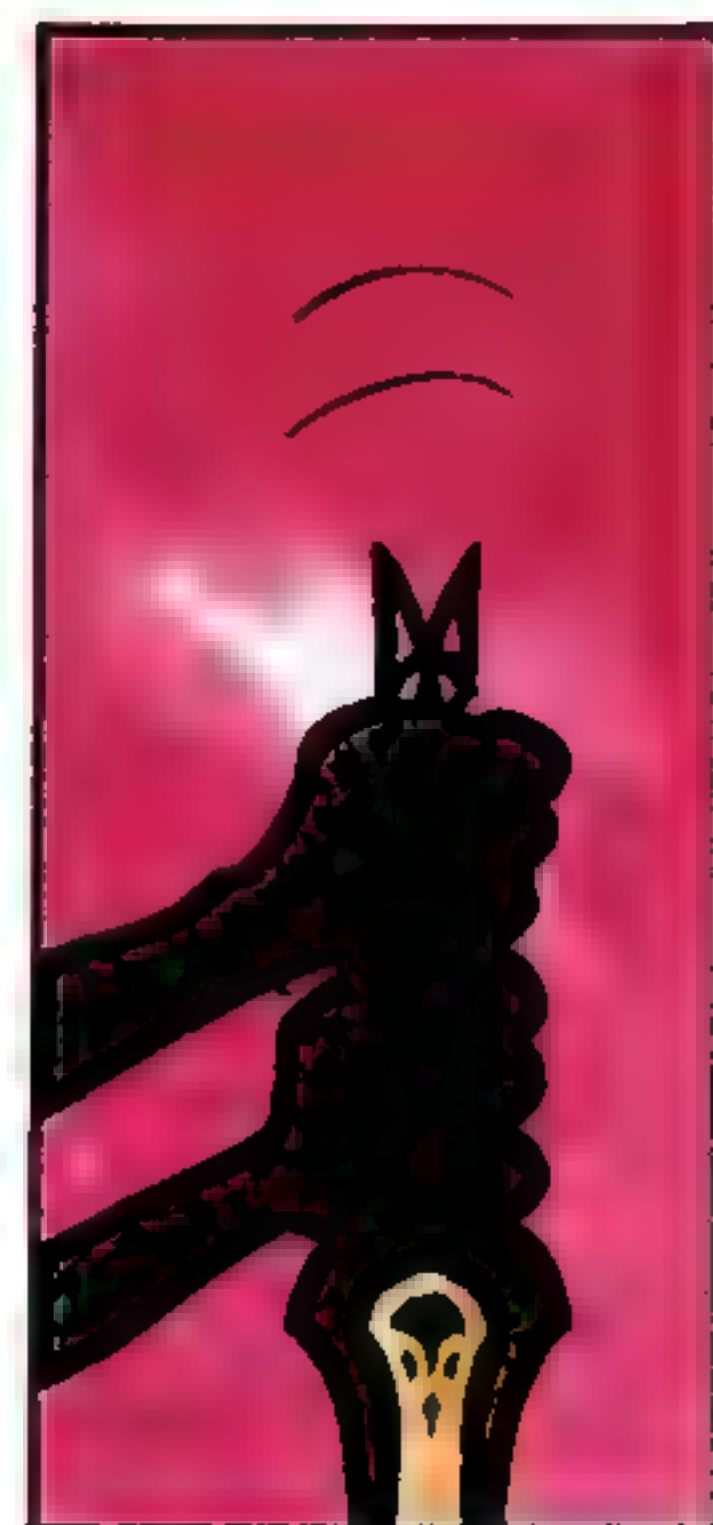
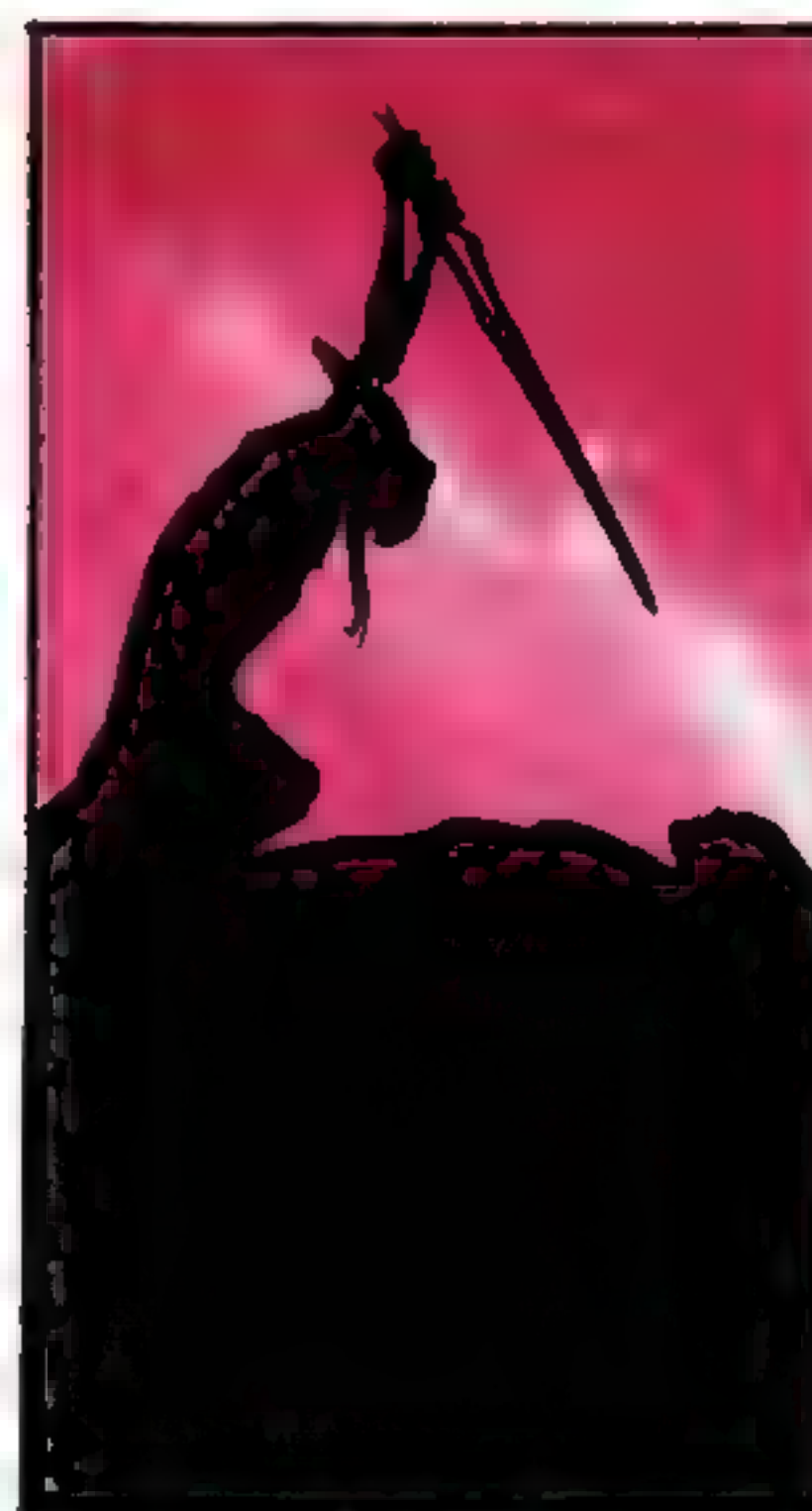
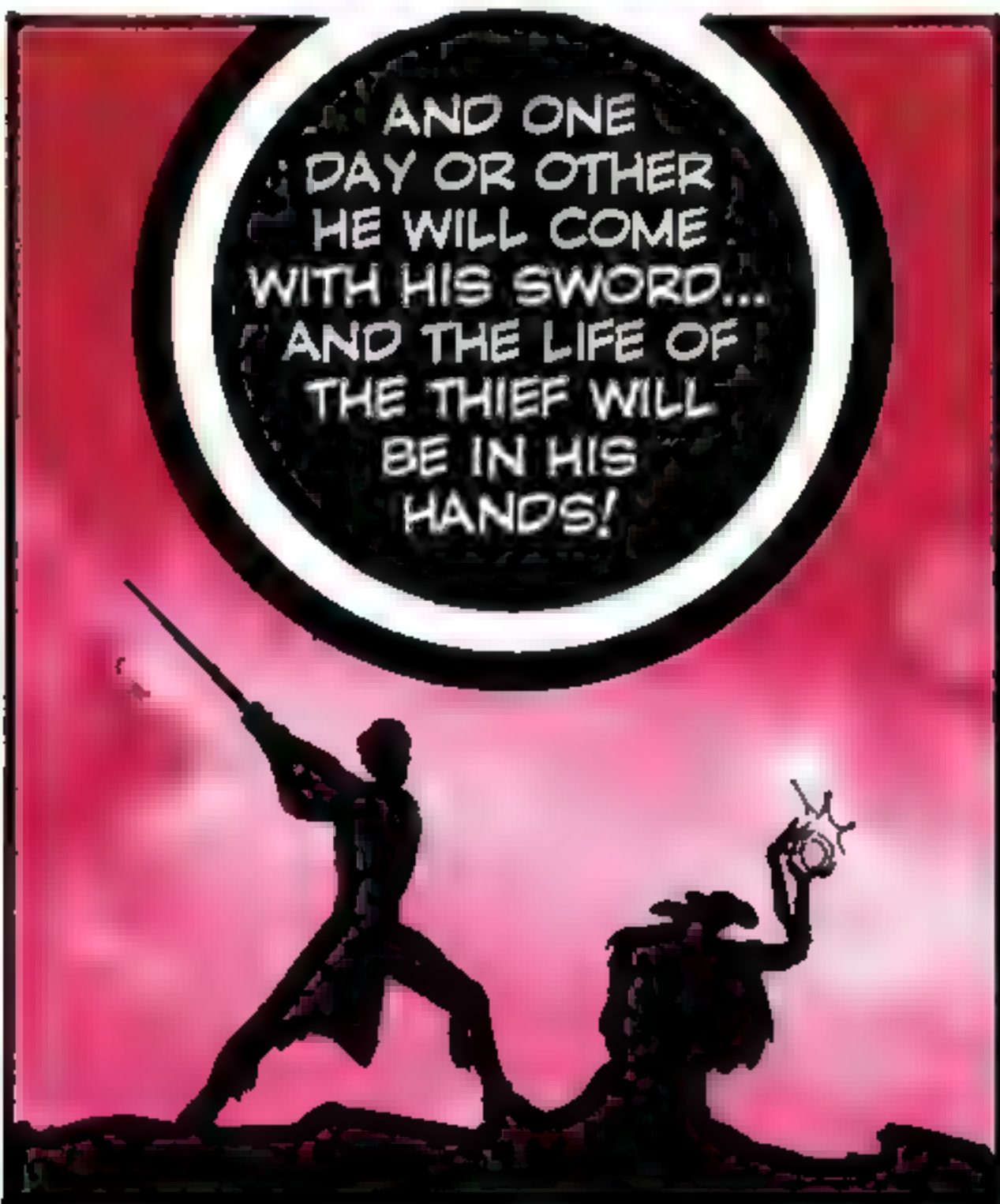
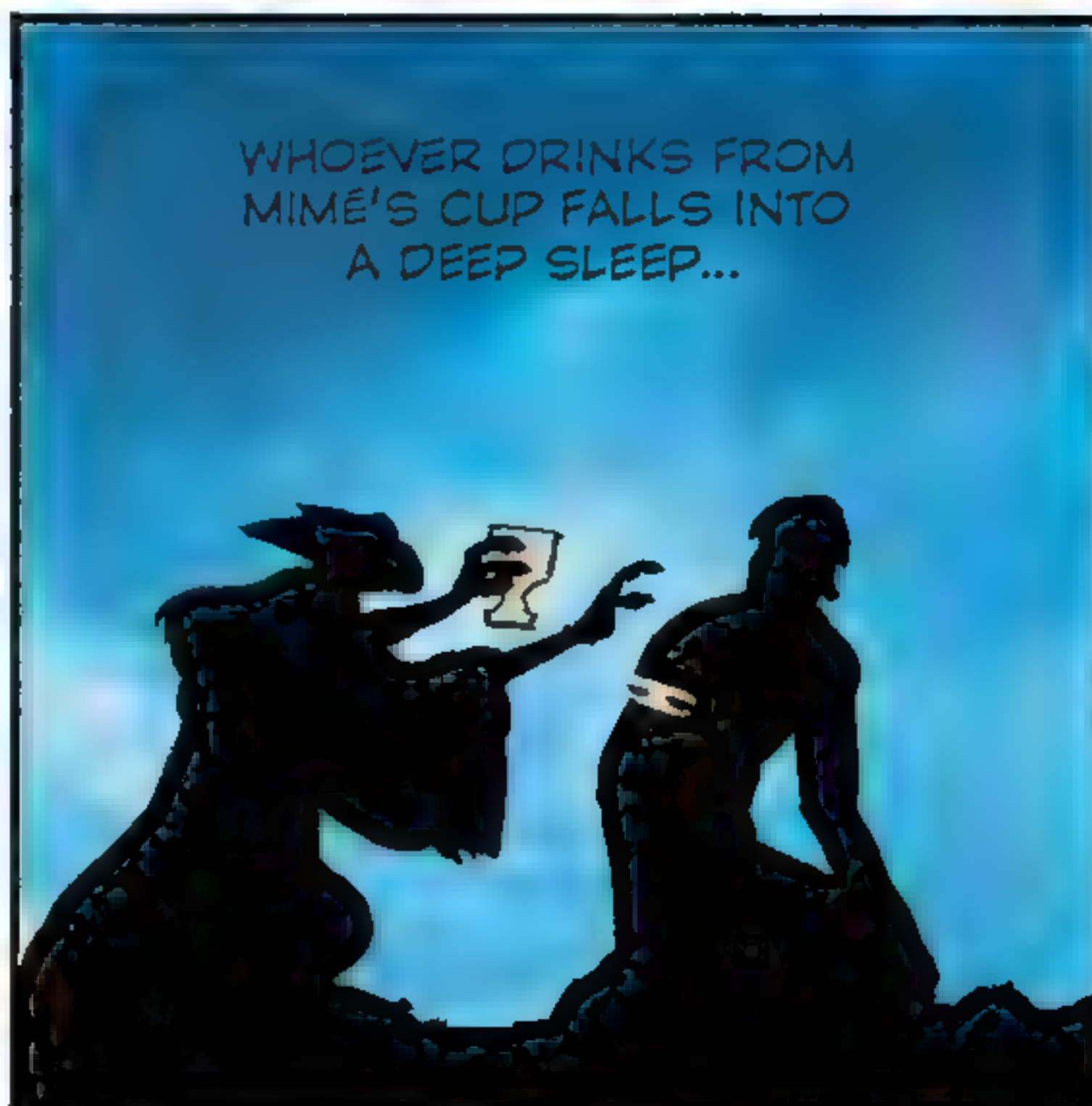
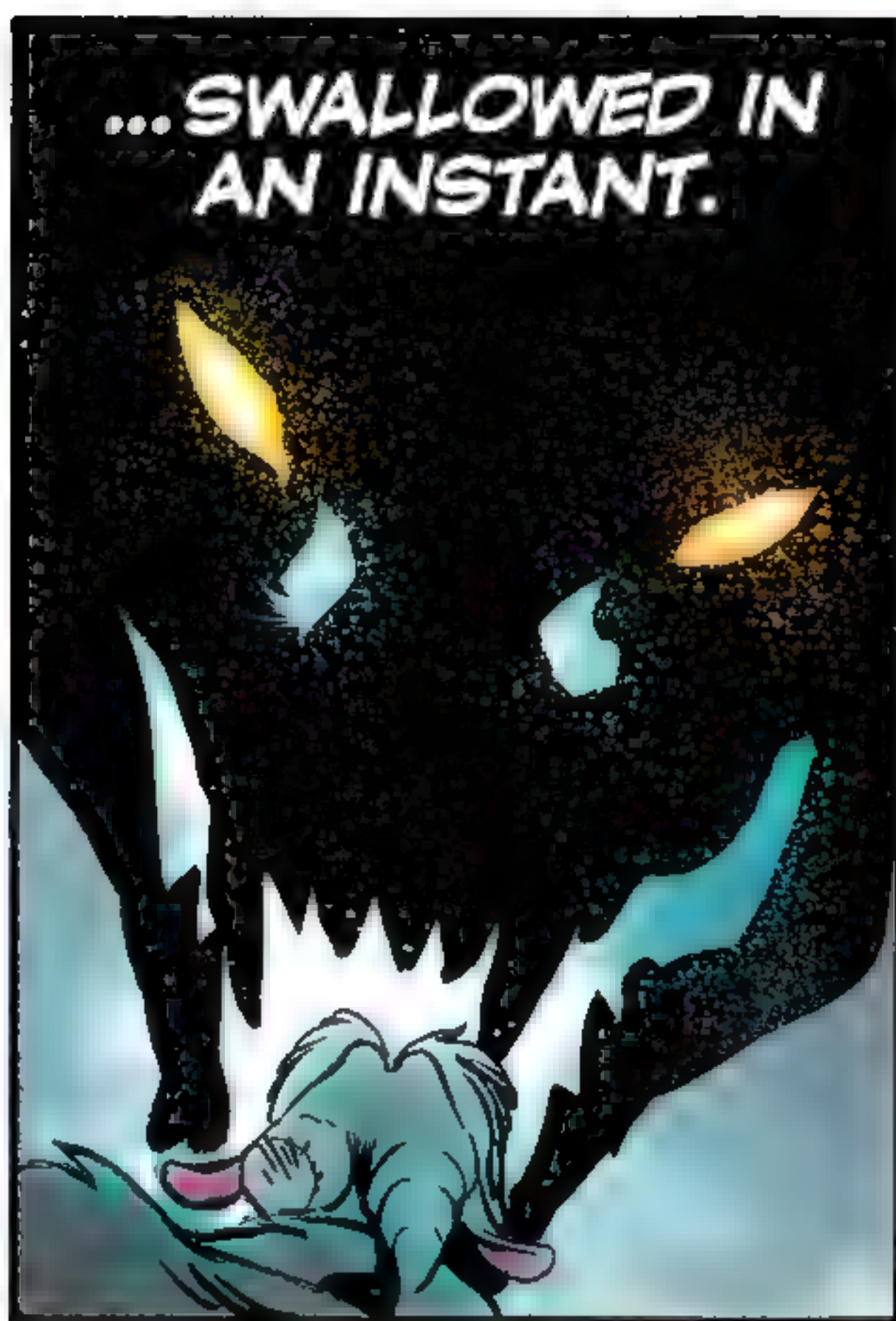
ARE YOU SURE IT'S MY SIZE?

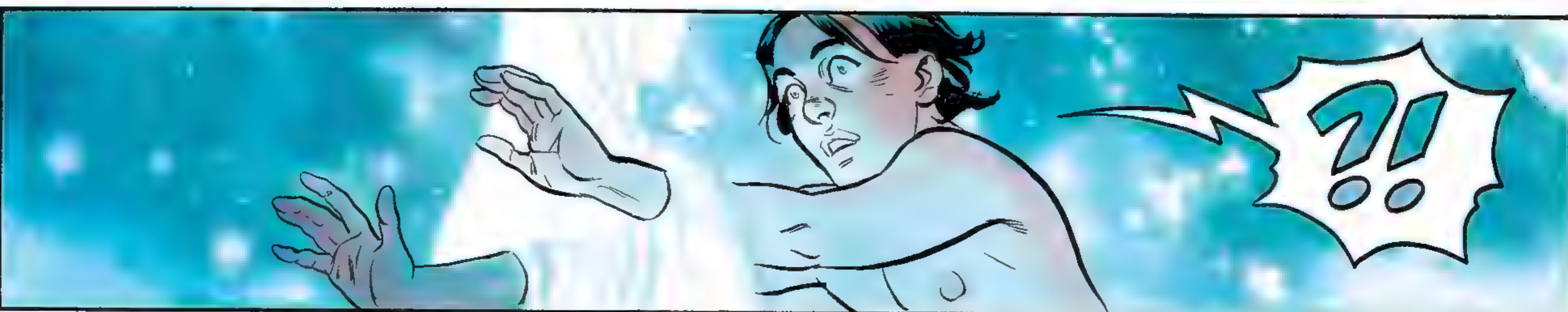
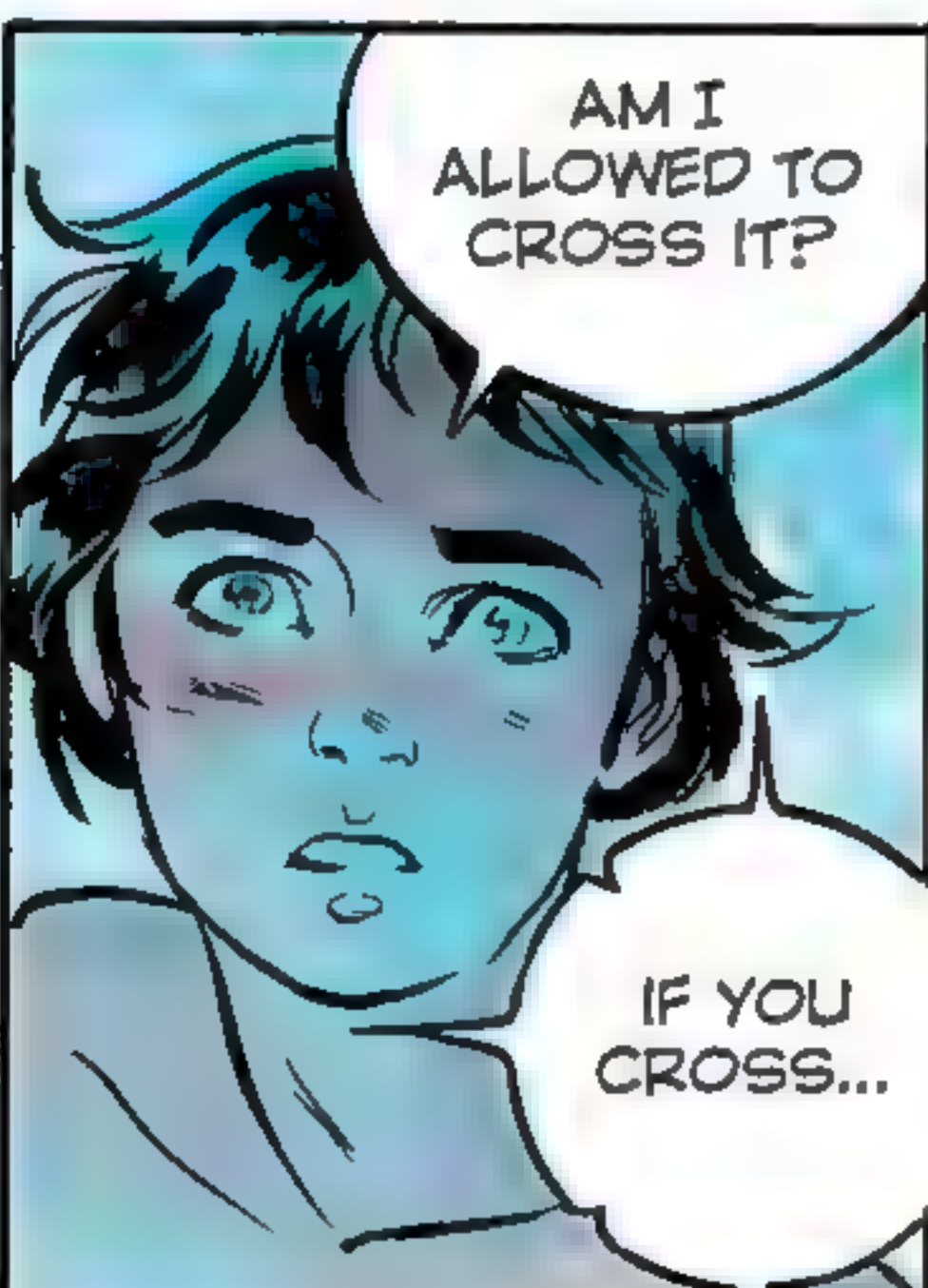
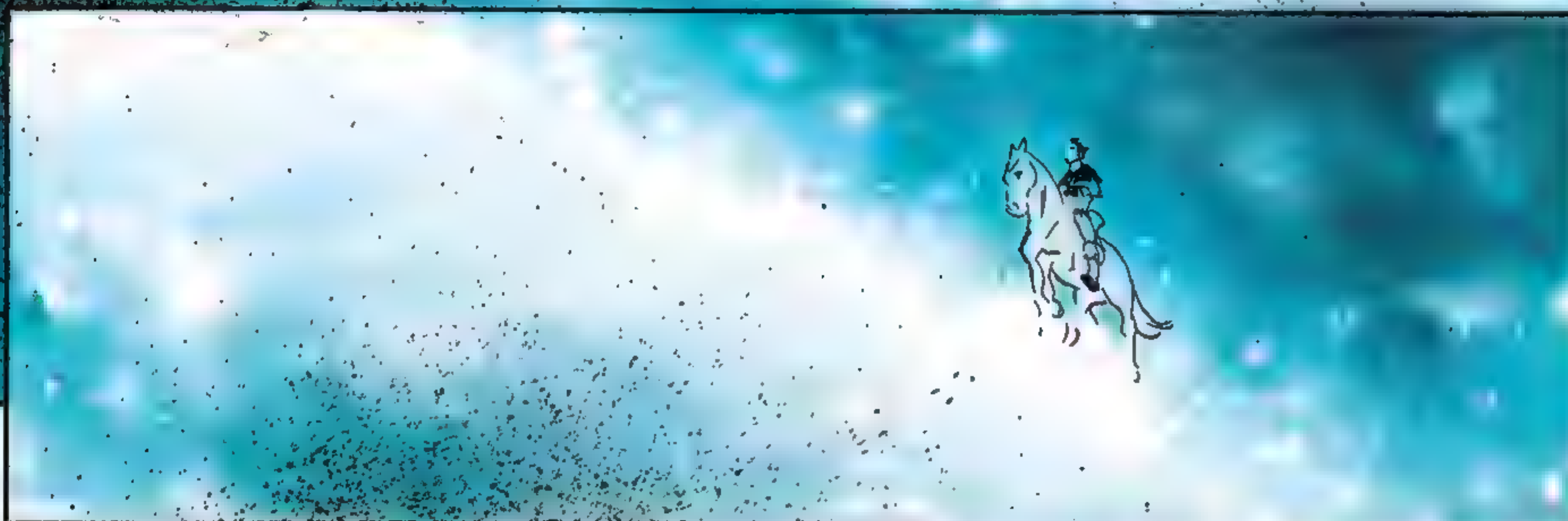
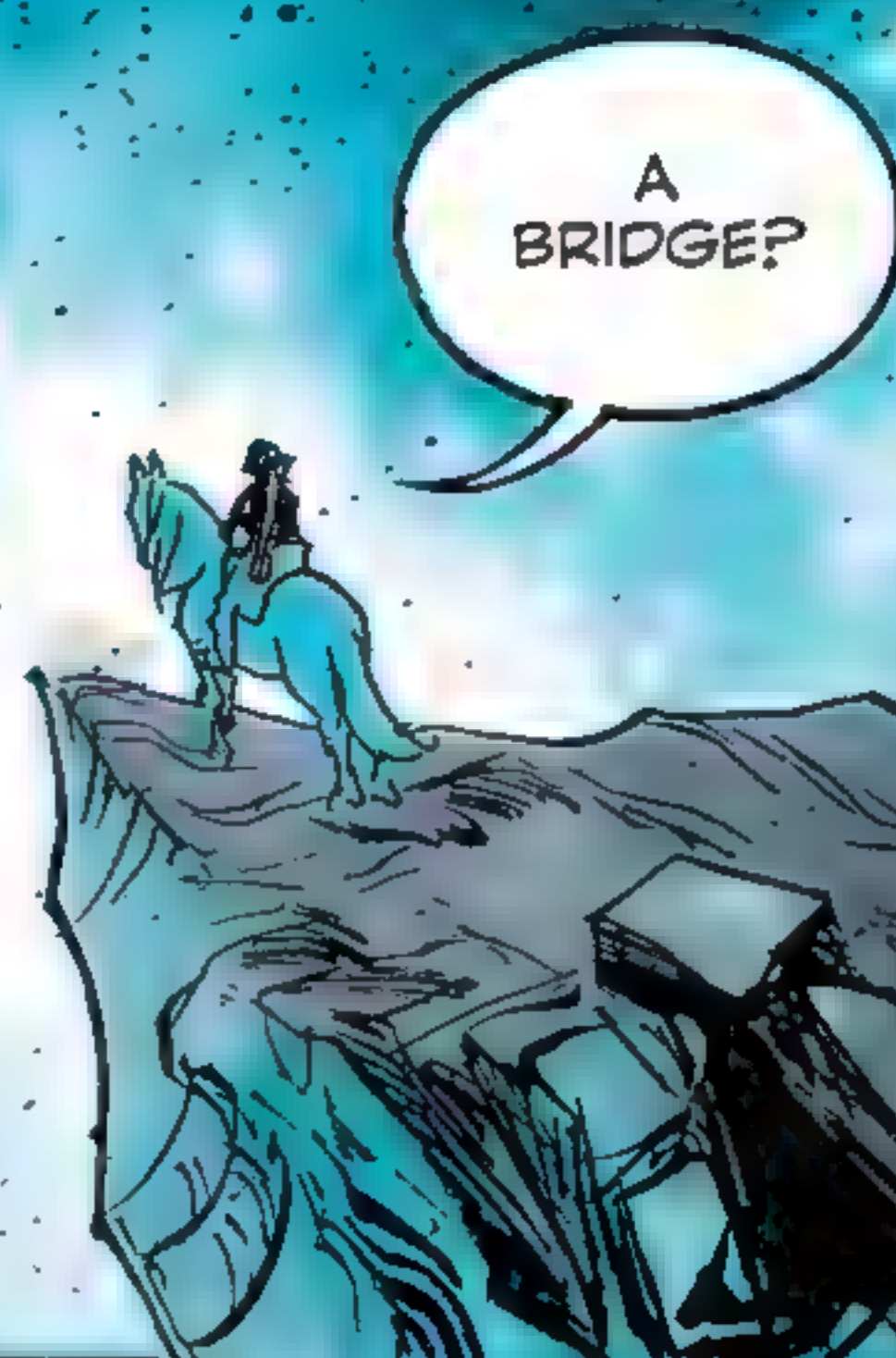
GIVE THAT BACK!

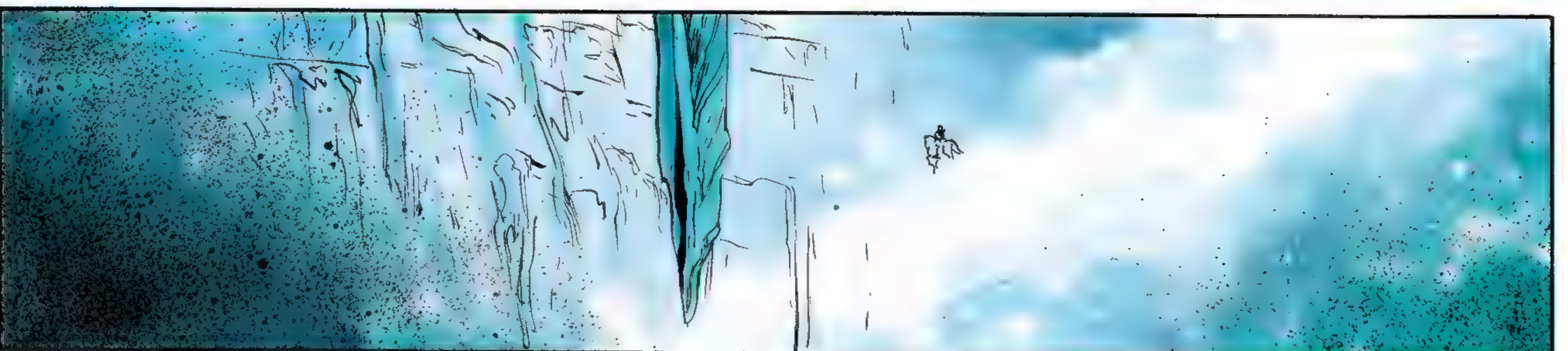
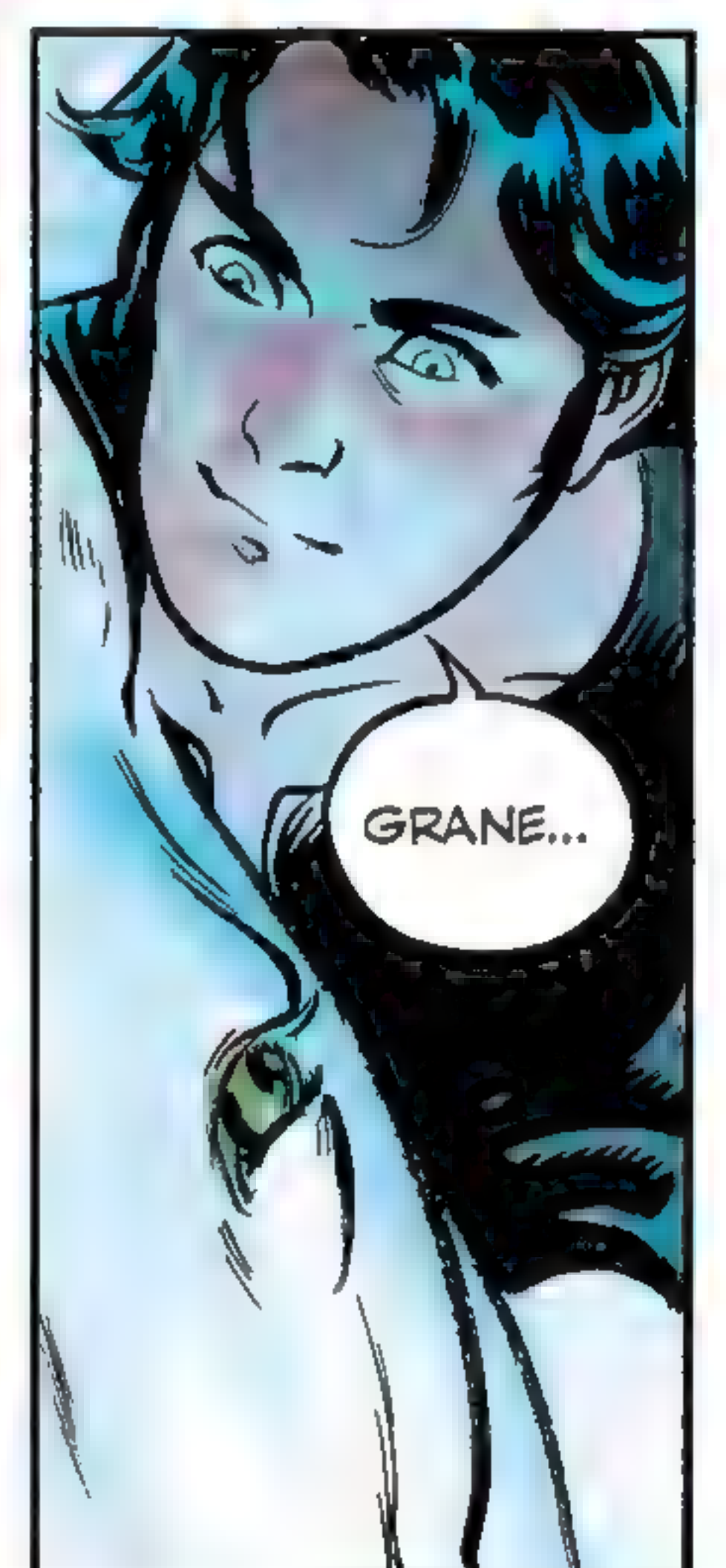
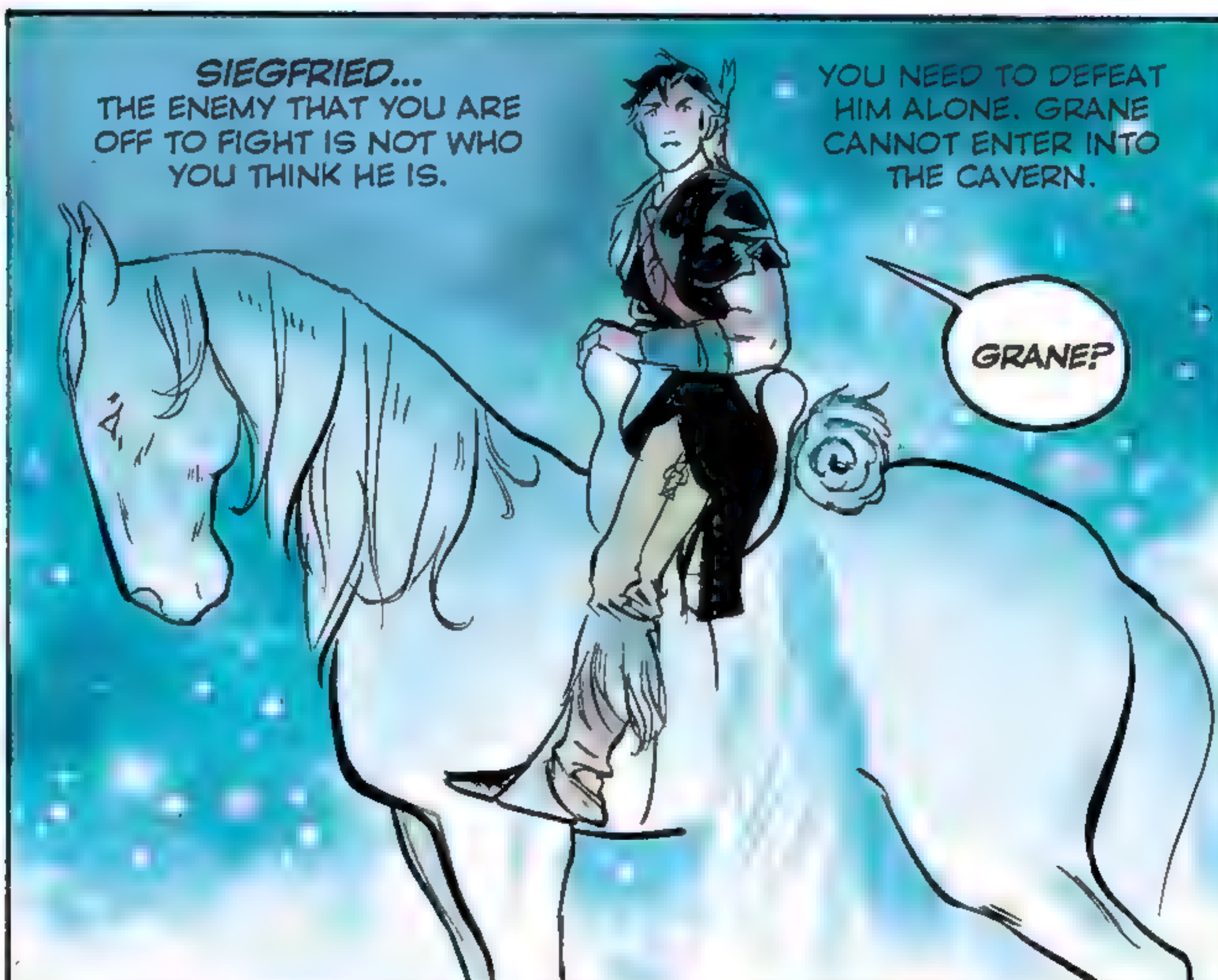
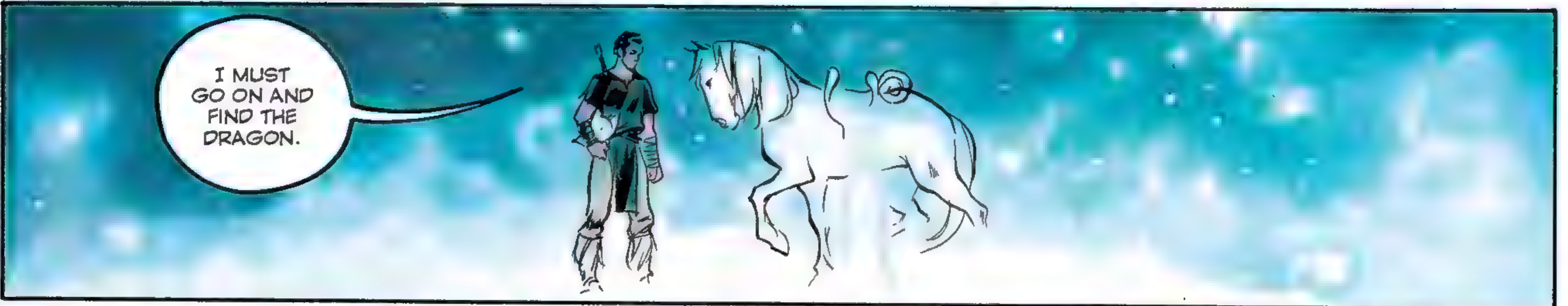
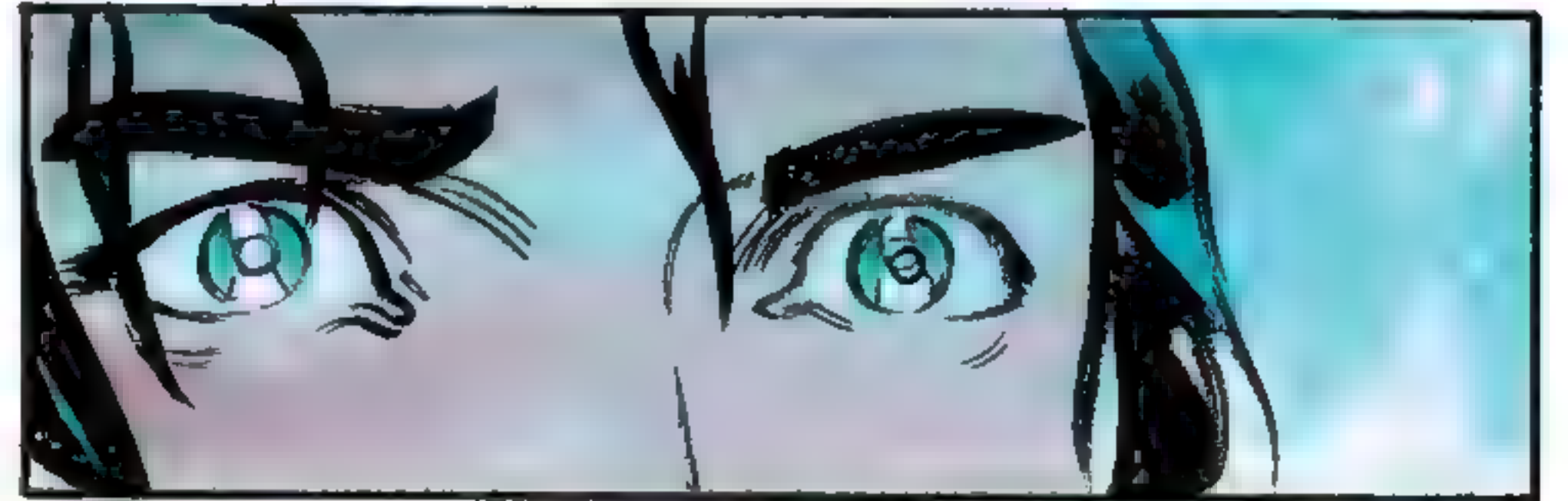
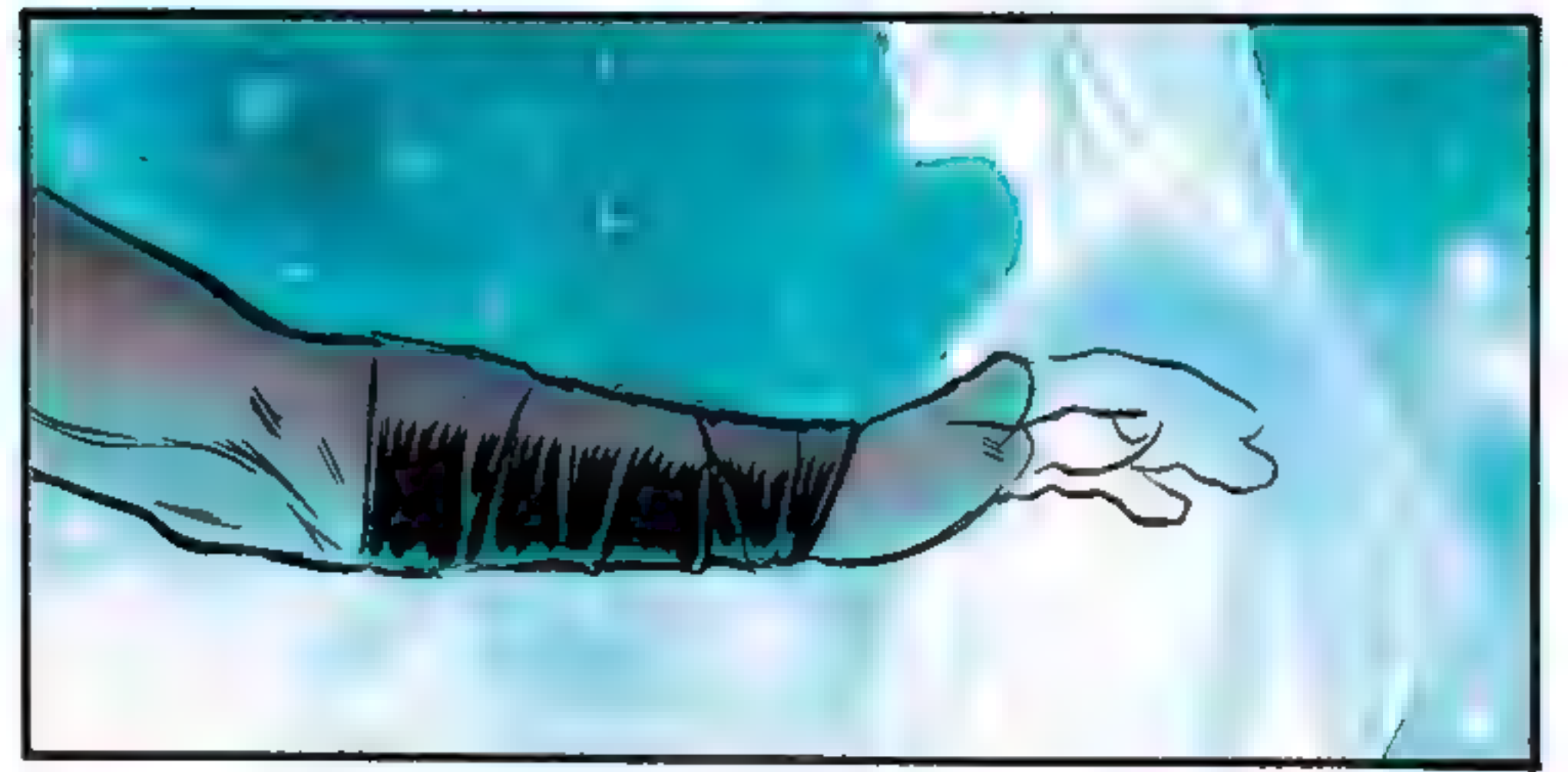
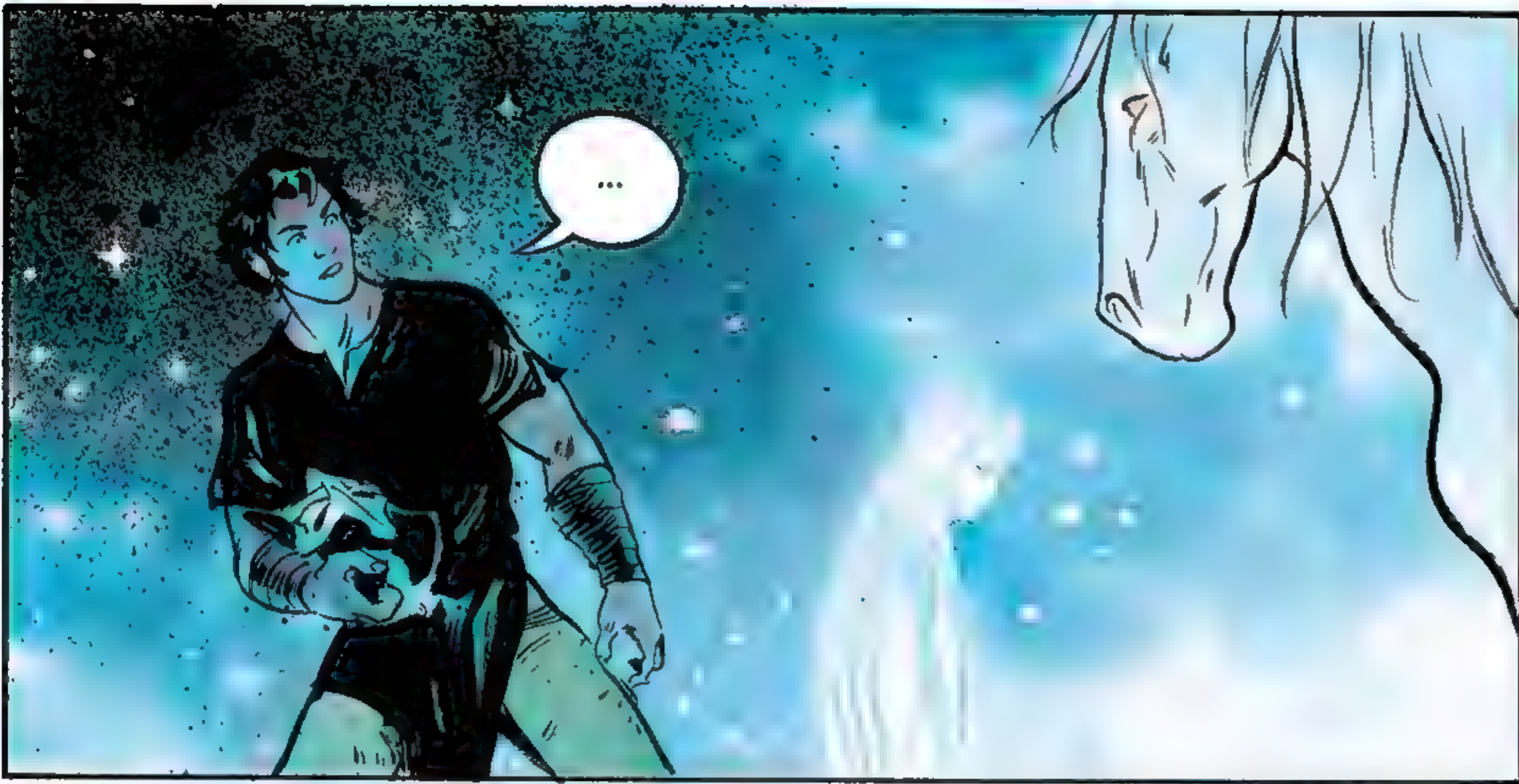


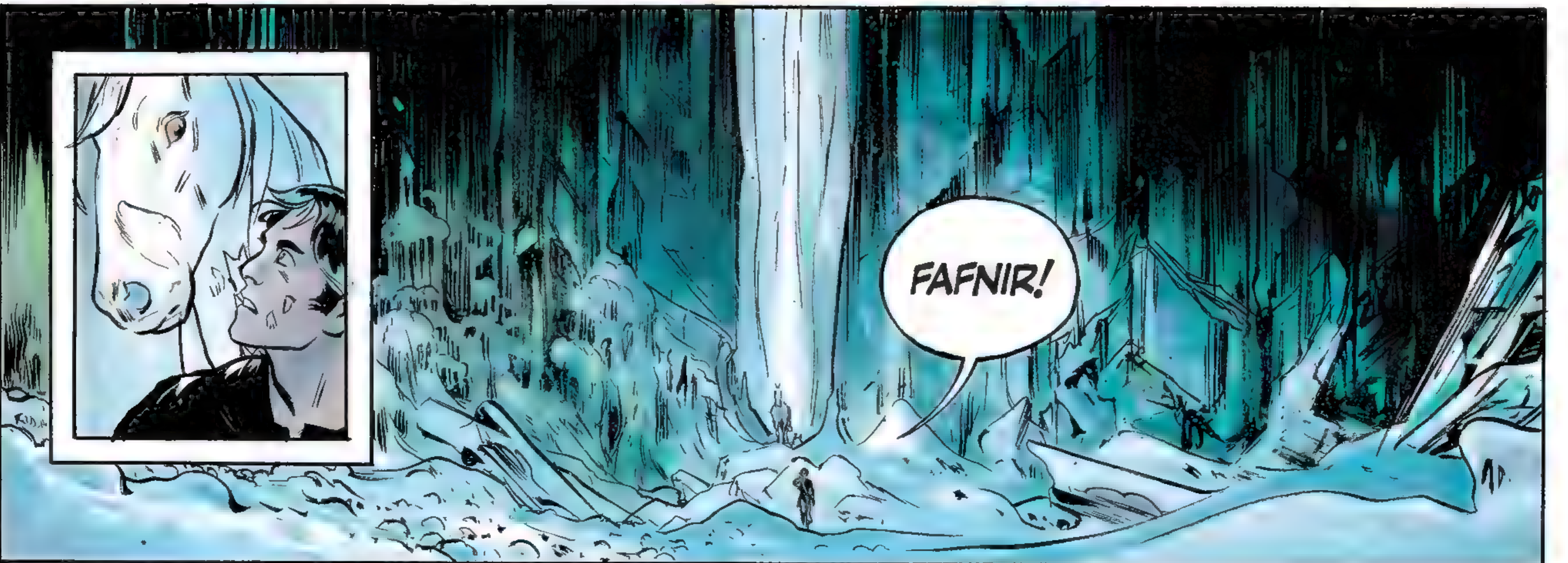
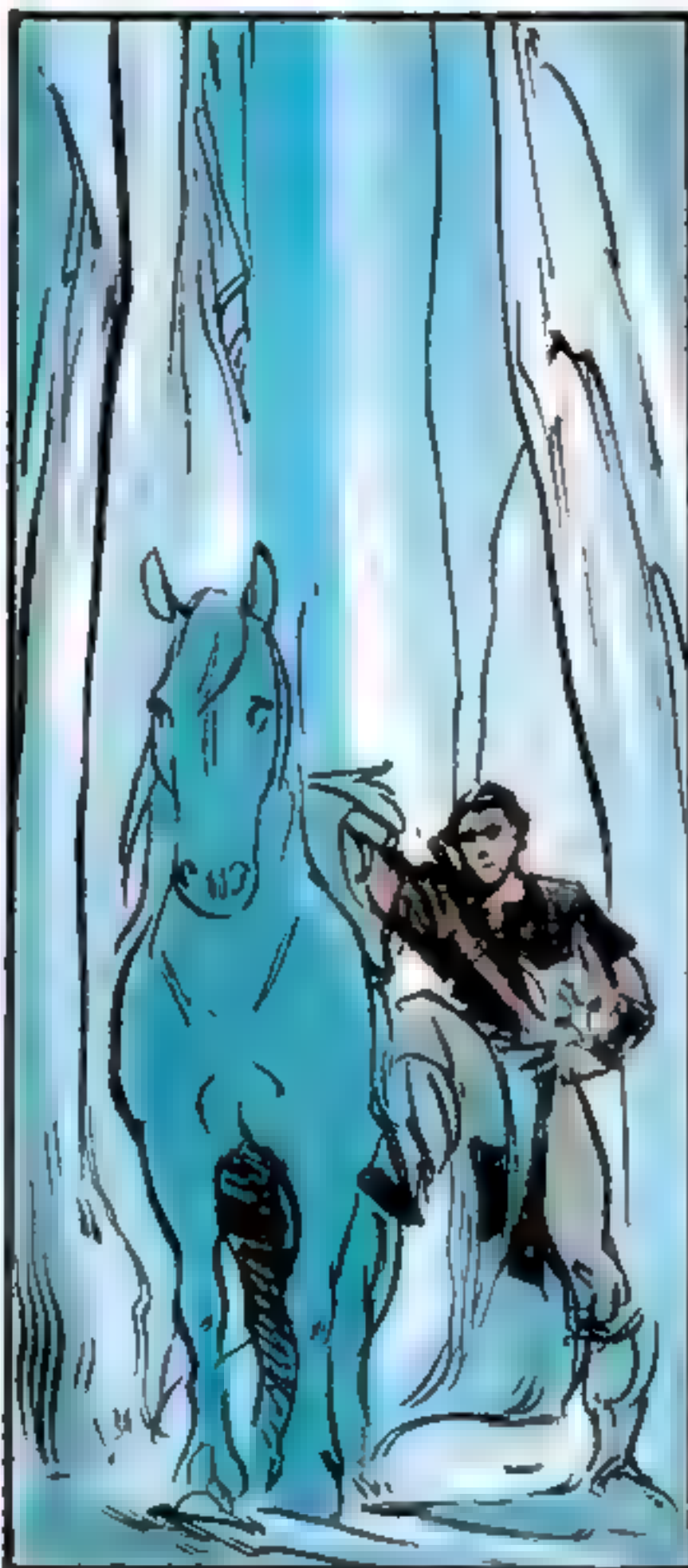
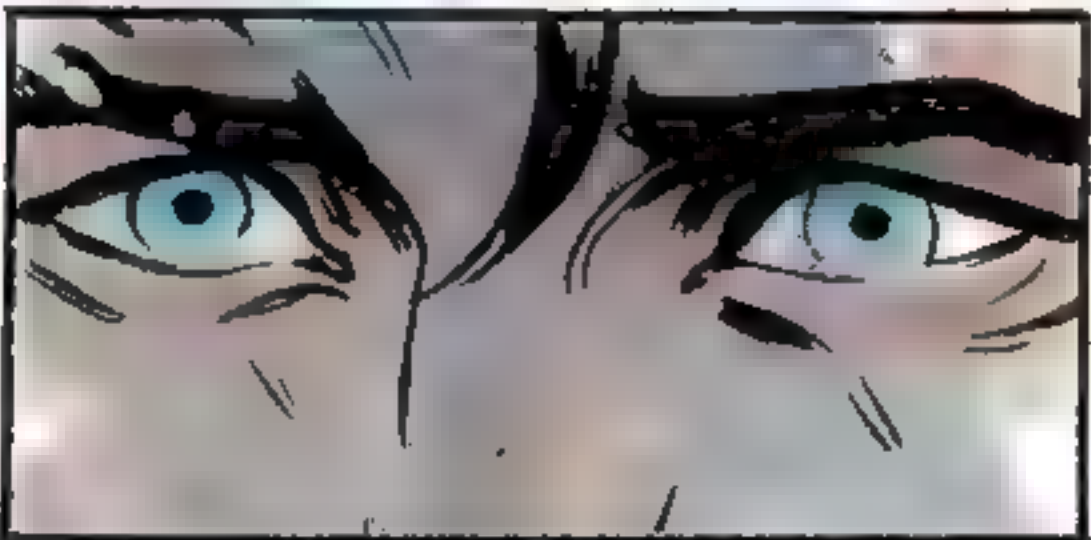
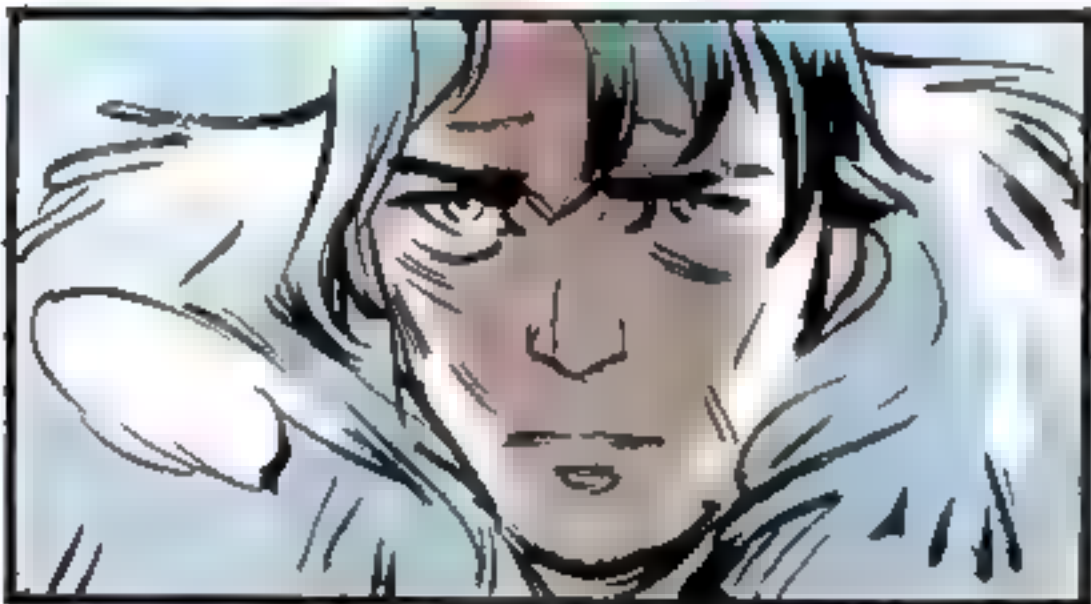
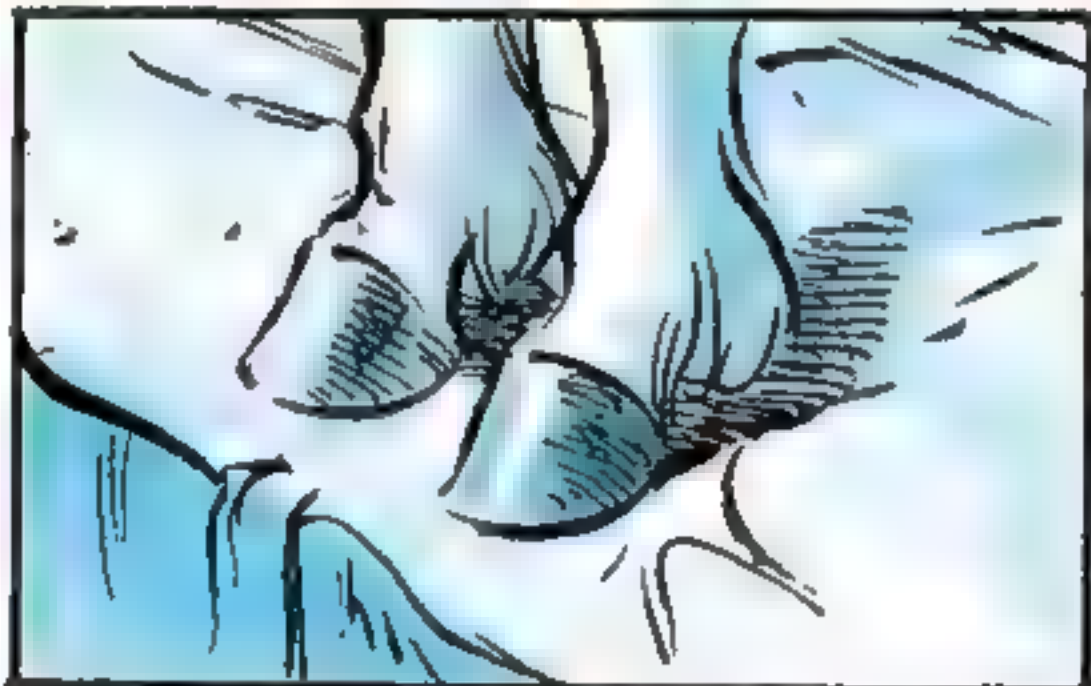
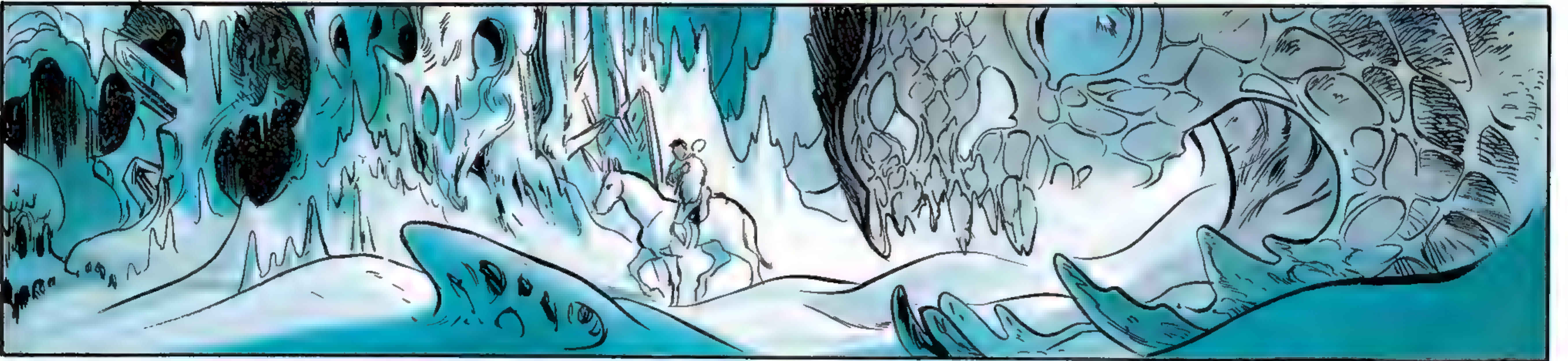
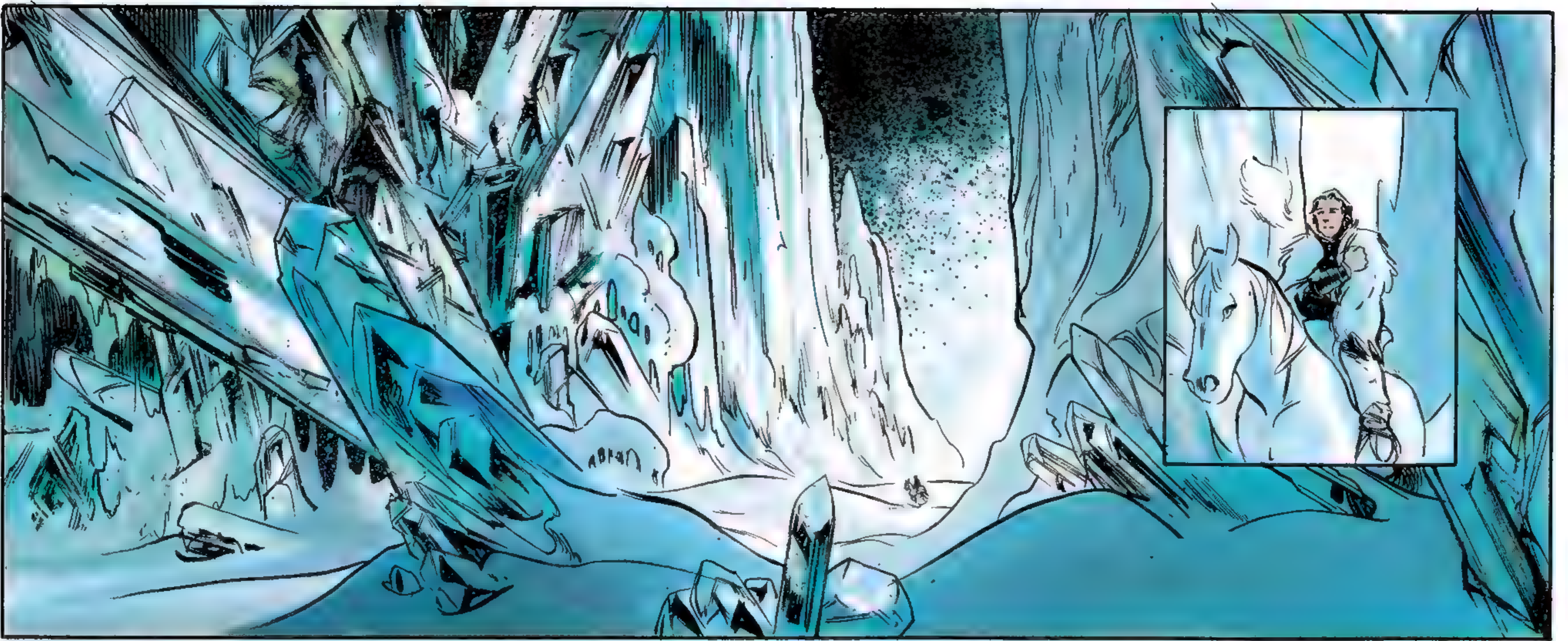
HERE, THIS IS A HELMET FORGED BY MIMÉ!

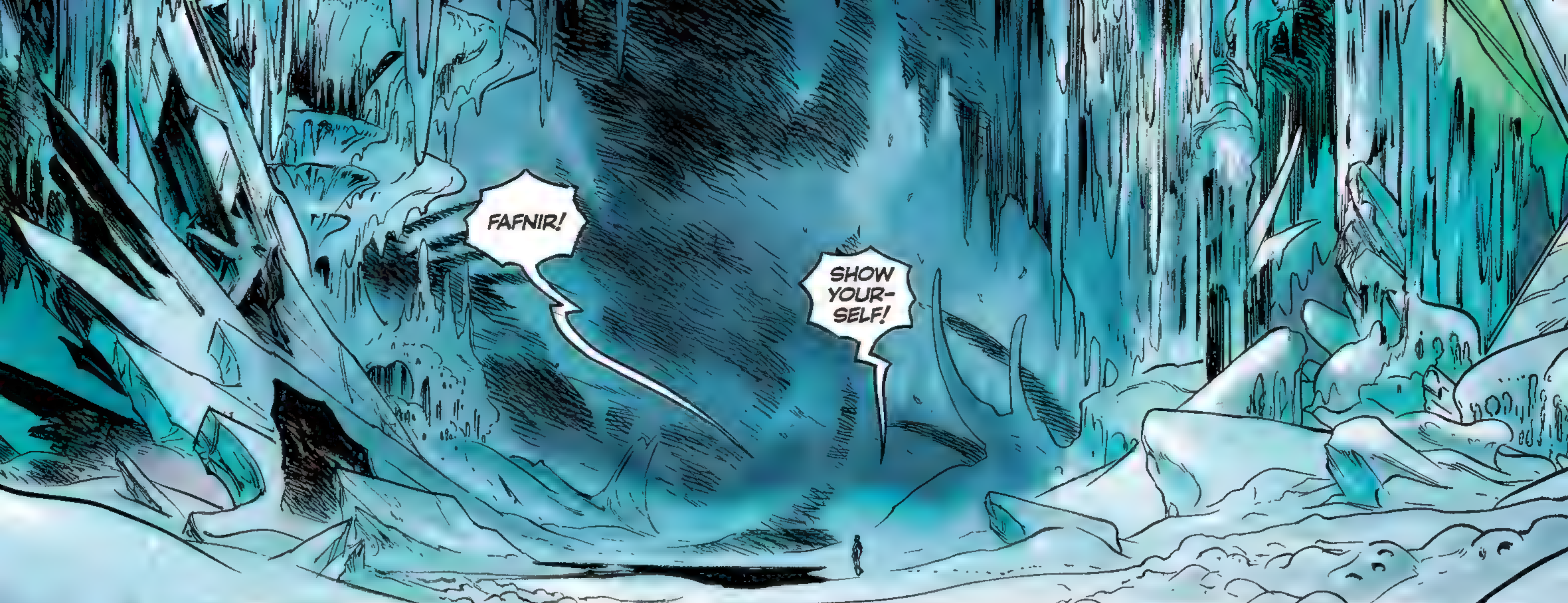












FAFNIR!

SHOW
YOUR-
SELF!



FAFNIR!

I
RECOGNIZE
YOUR
ODOR.



...
WHERE
ARE YOU
HIDING?



YOU
SMELL
LIKE YOUR
MOTHER.



YOU
KNEW MY
MOTHER?

SHE IS
HERE.



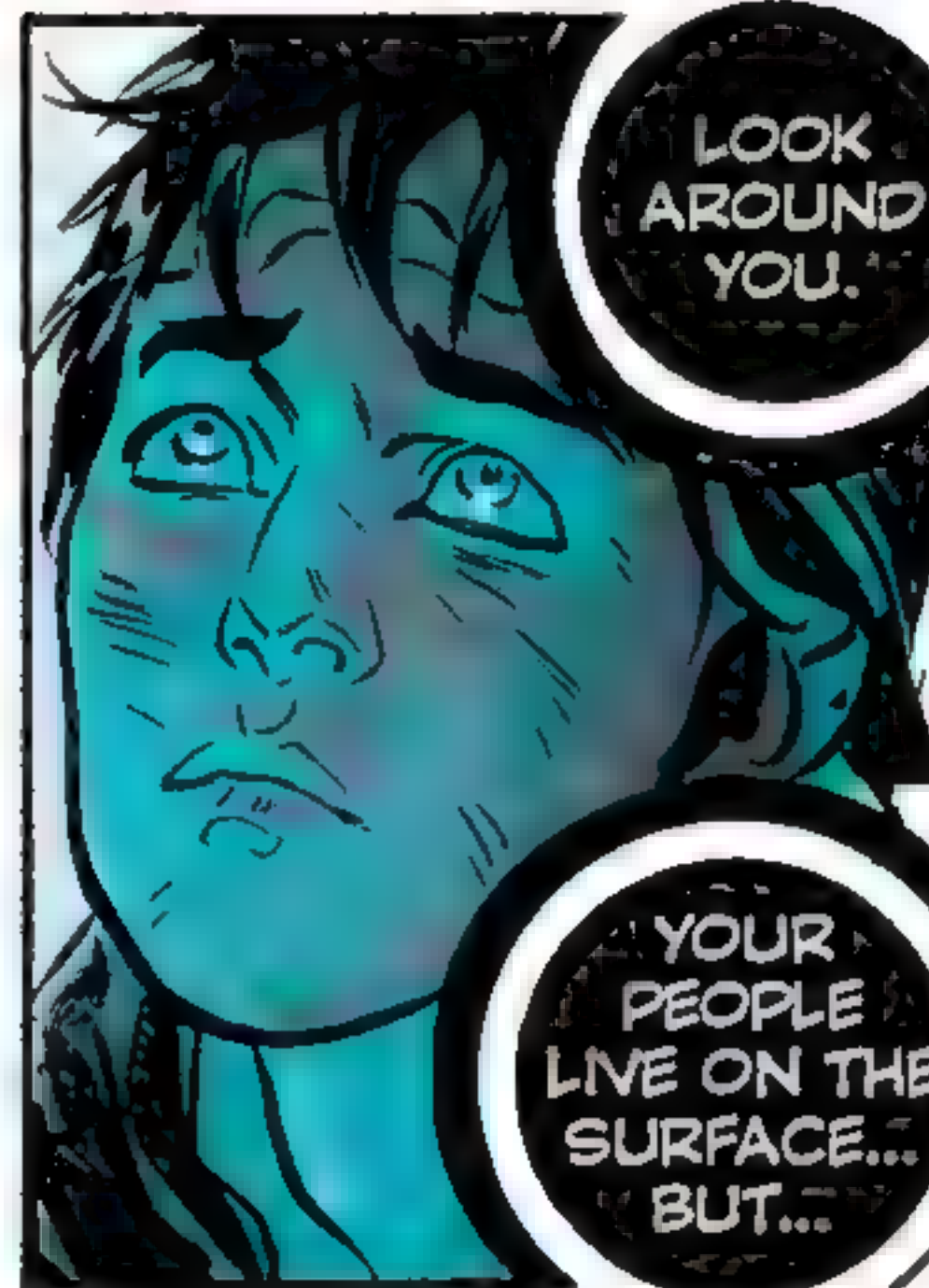
WHAT?!

YES...
LIKE ALL
YOUR
PEOPLE...



NO. MY PEOPLE LIVE
ON THE SURFACE,
IN THE LAND OF
MEN!

YOU ARE
BUT A CHILD...
DO YOU WANT
TO KNOW THE
SECRET THAT
WILL MAKE YOU
A MAN?



LOOK
AROUND
YOU.

YOUR
PEOPLE
LIVE ON THE
SURFACE...
BUT...



...THEY
ALL
END UP
HERE.



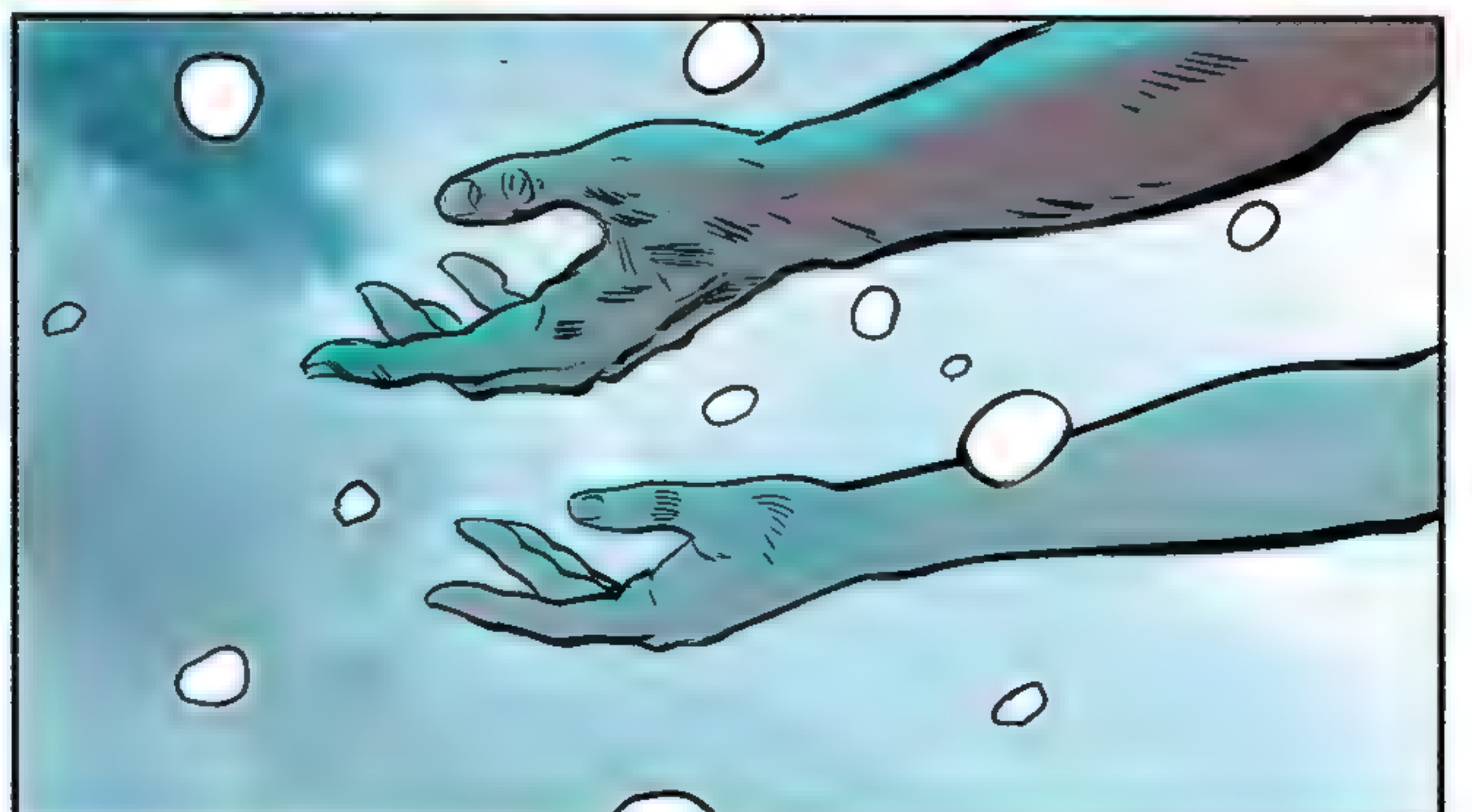
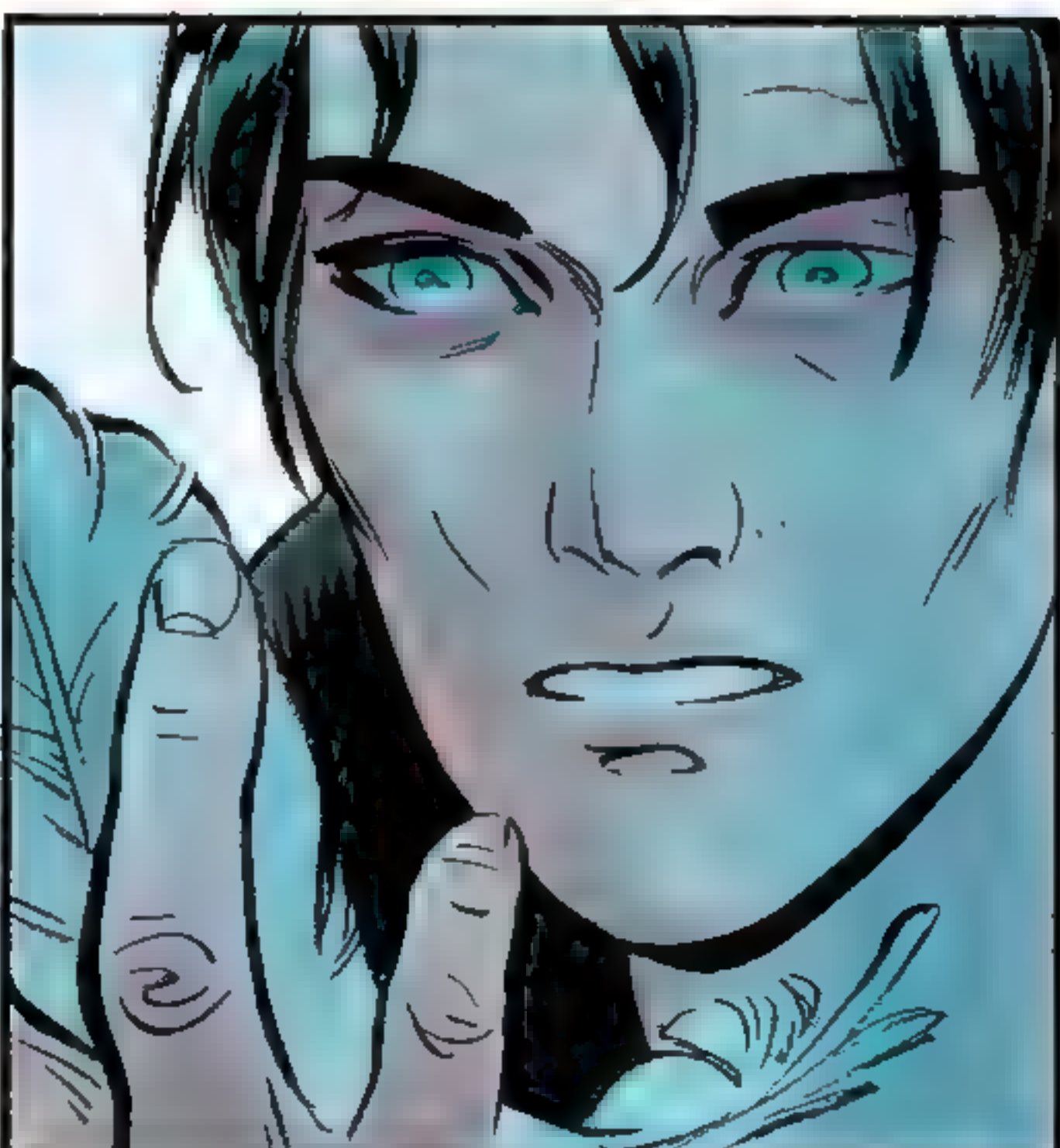
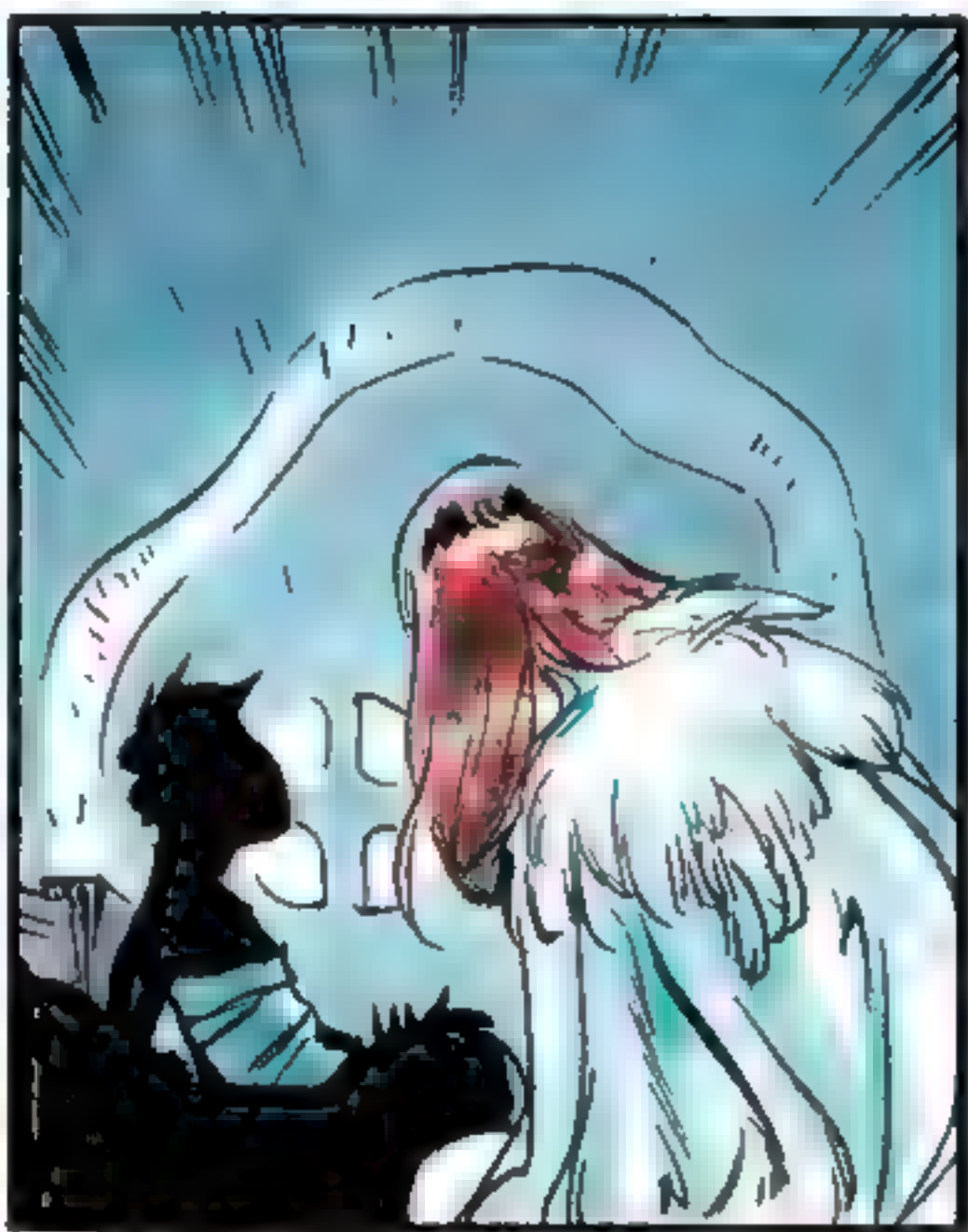
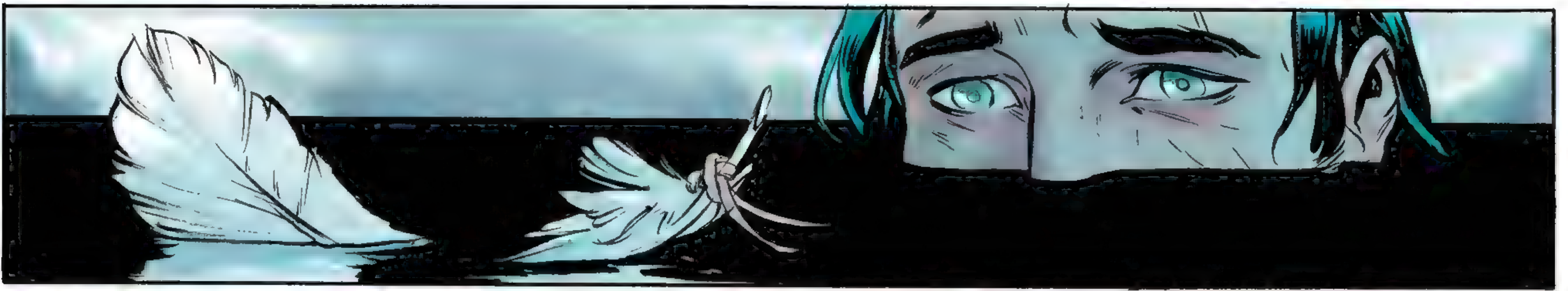
YOUR
FATHER IS
HERE, YOUR
MOTHER.

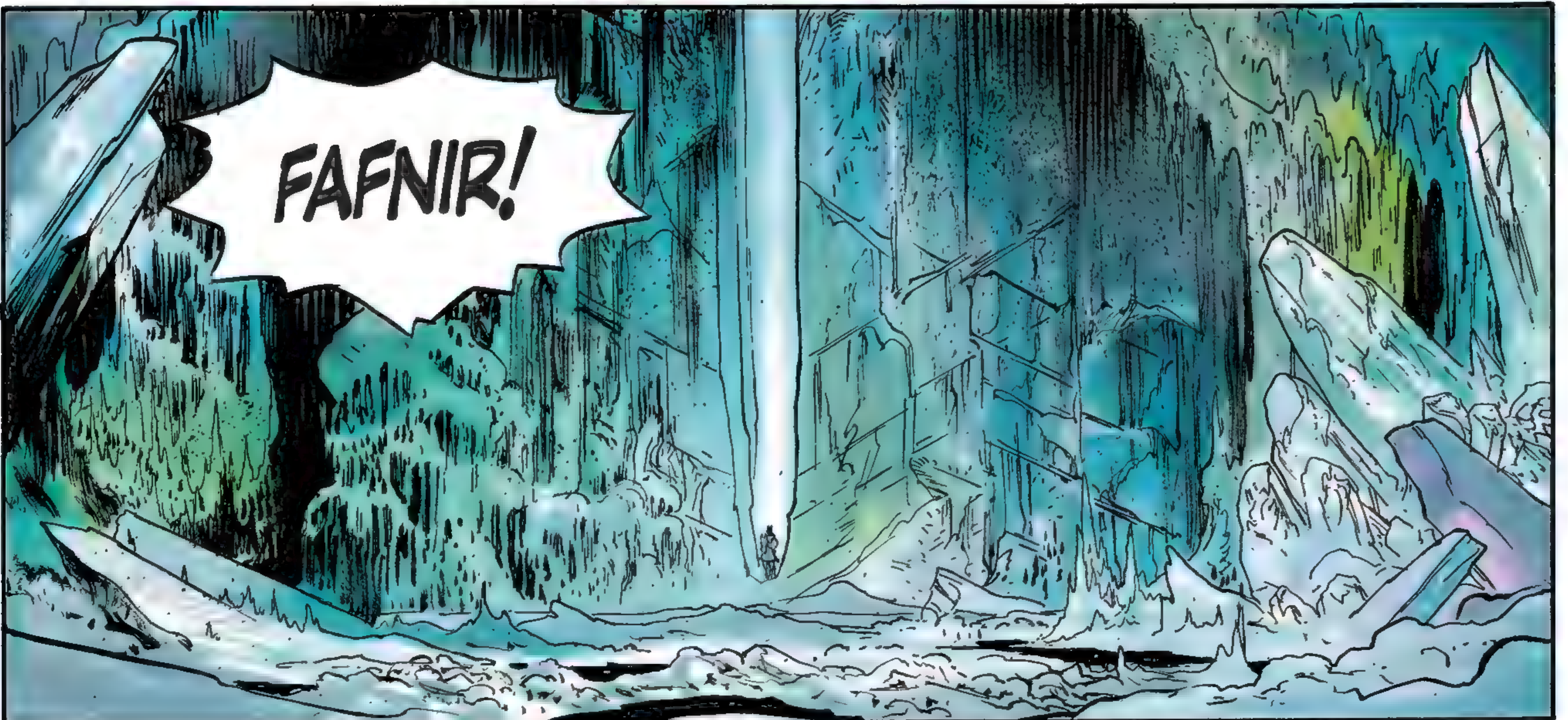
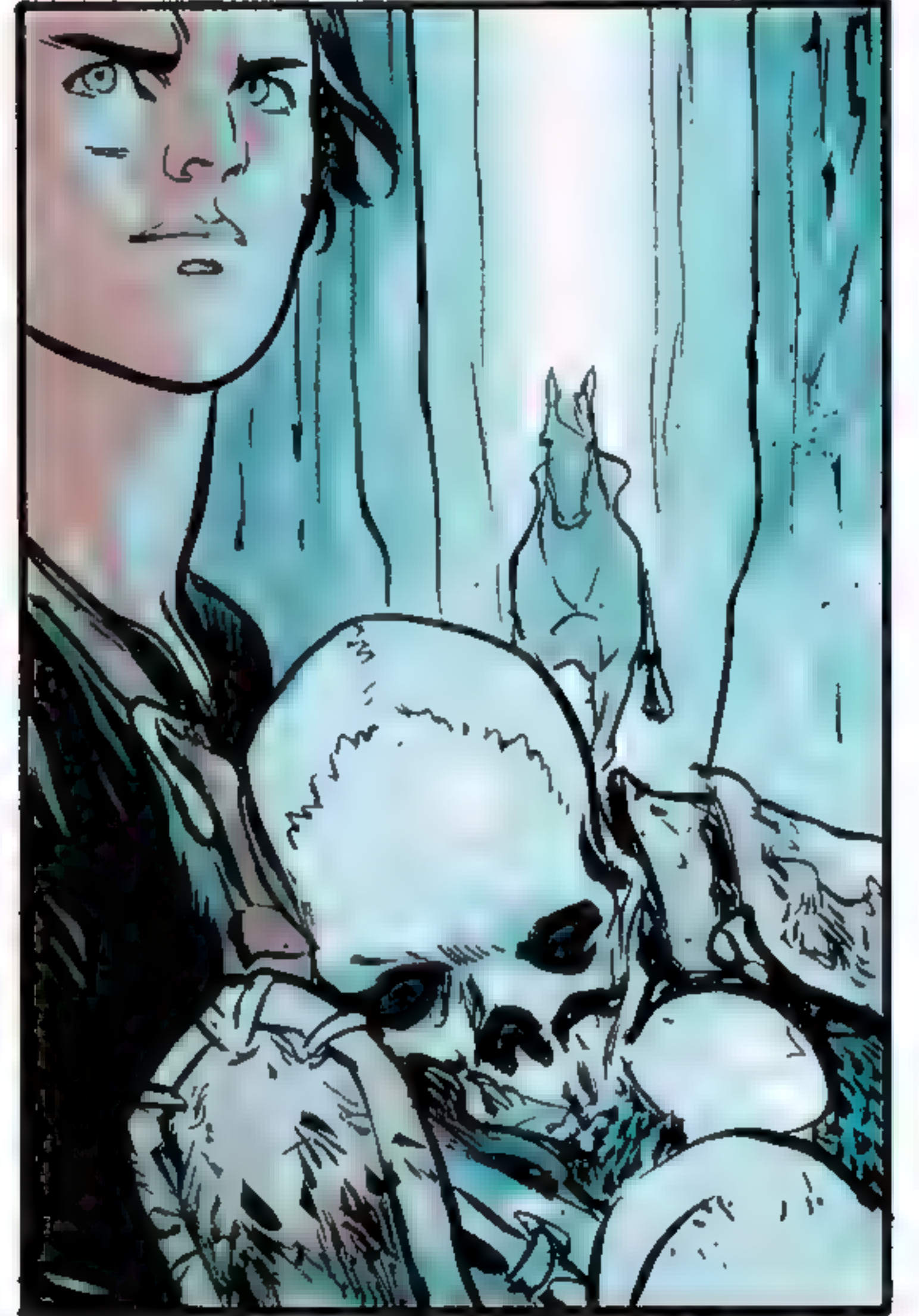
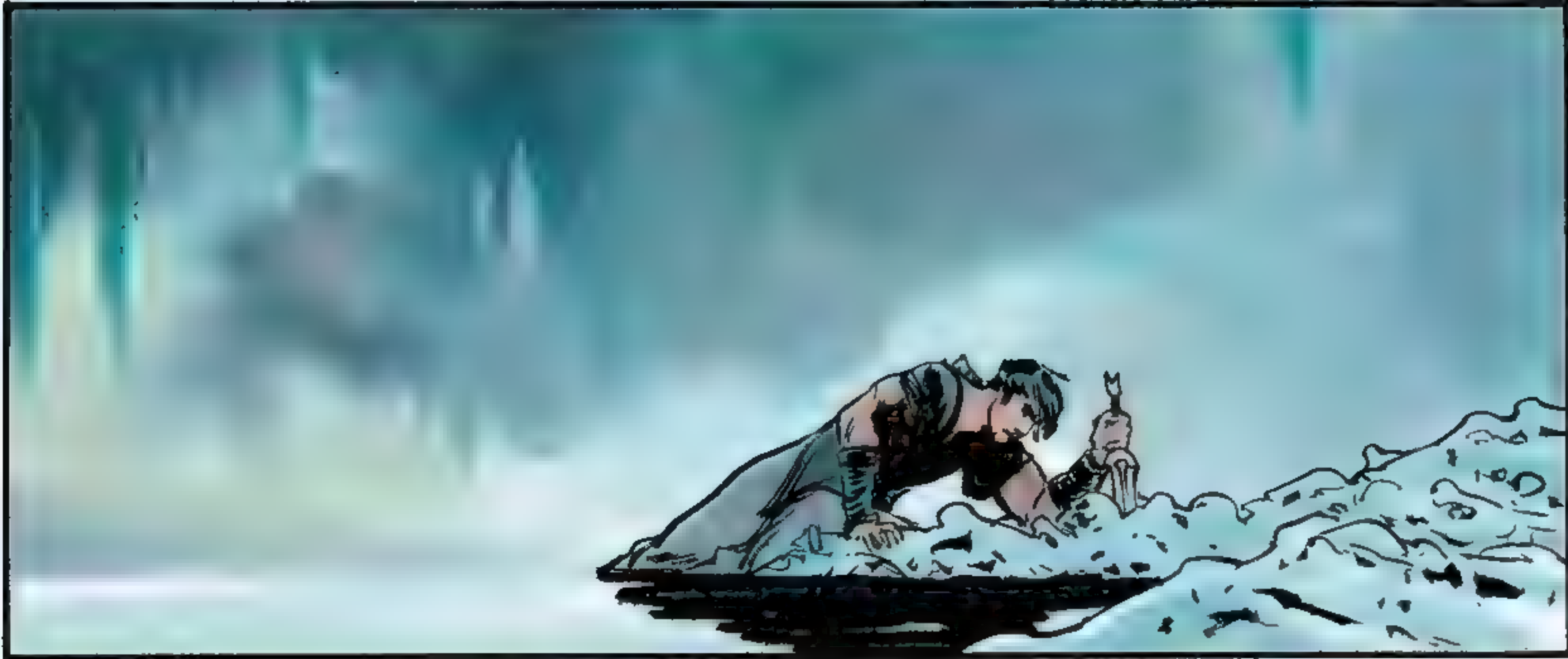
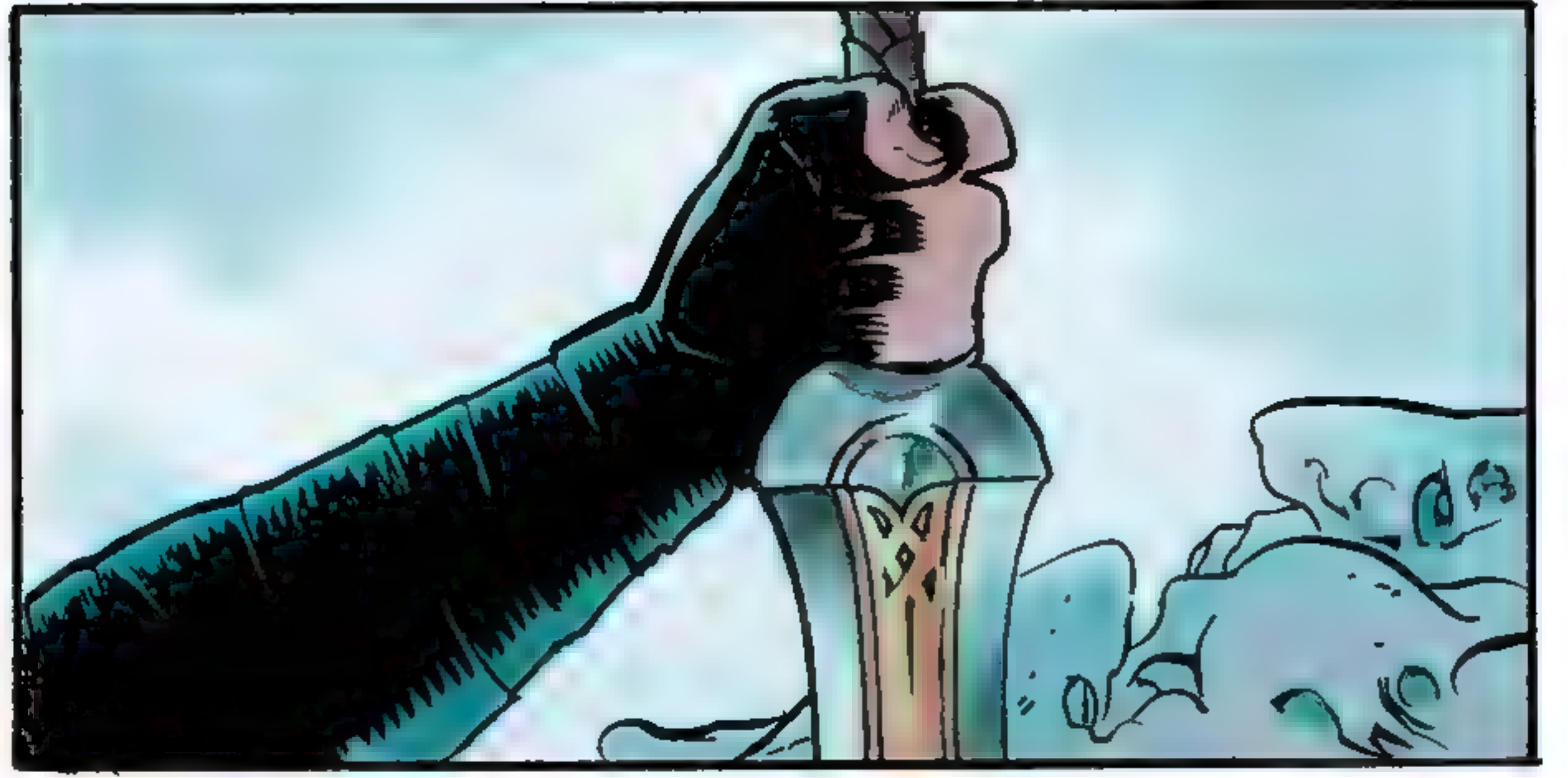
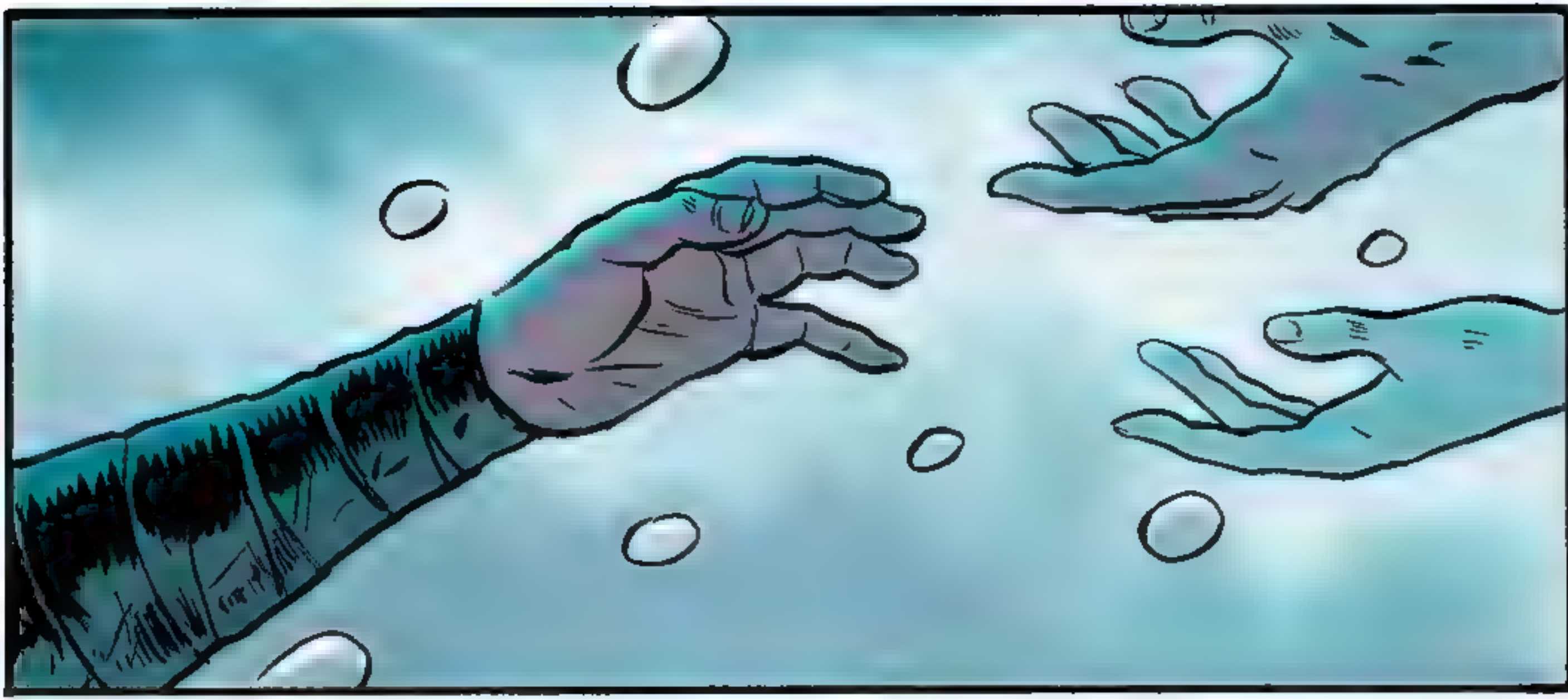
ALL
THOSE
THAT CAME
BEFORE
YOU...

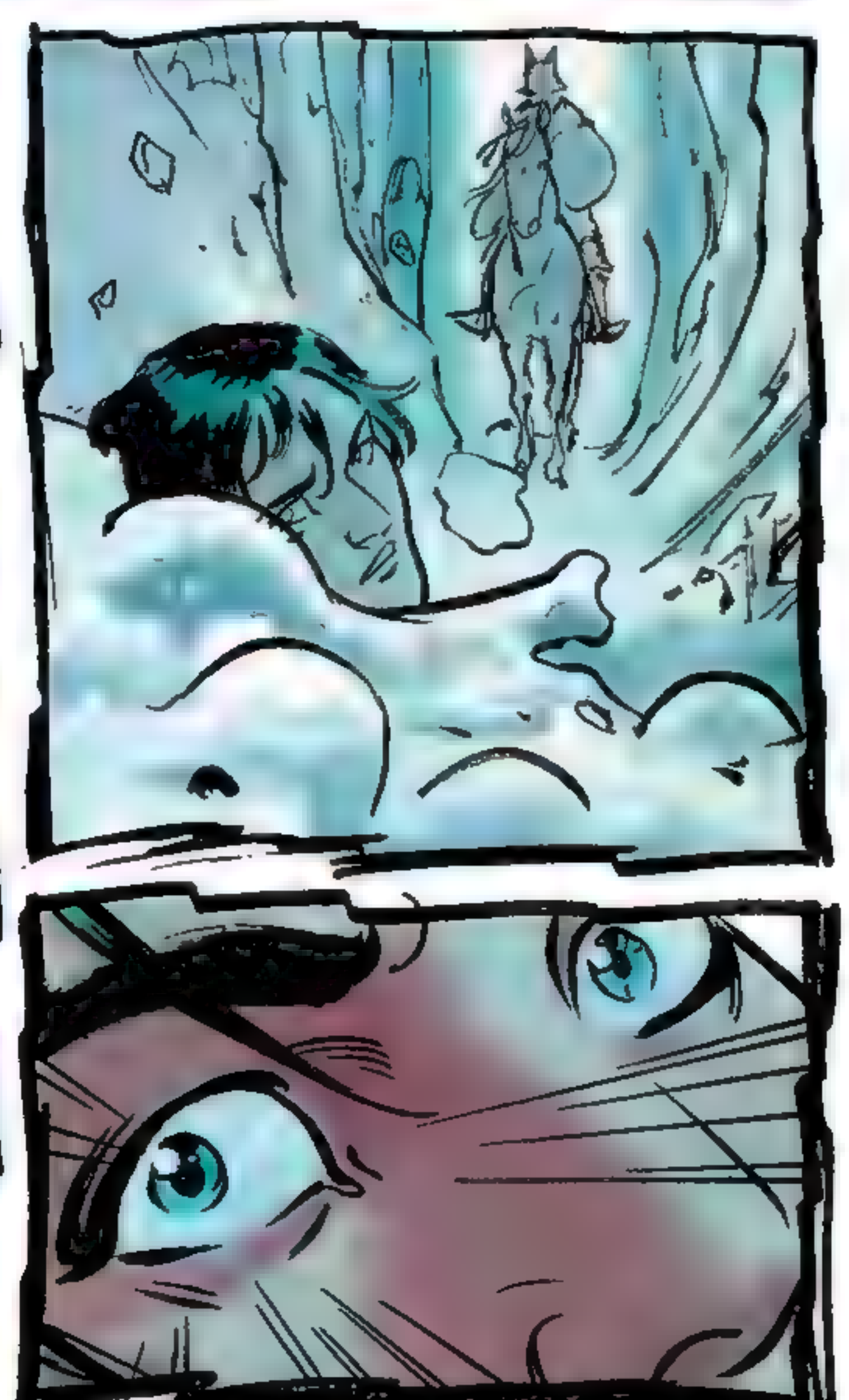
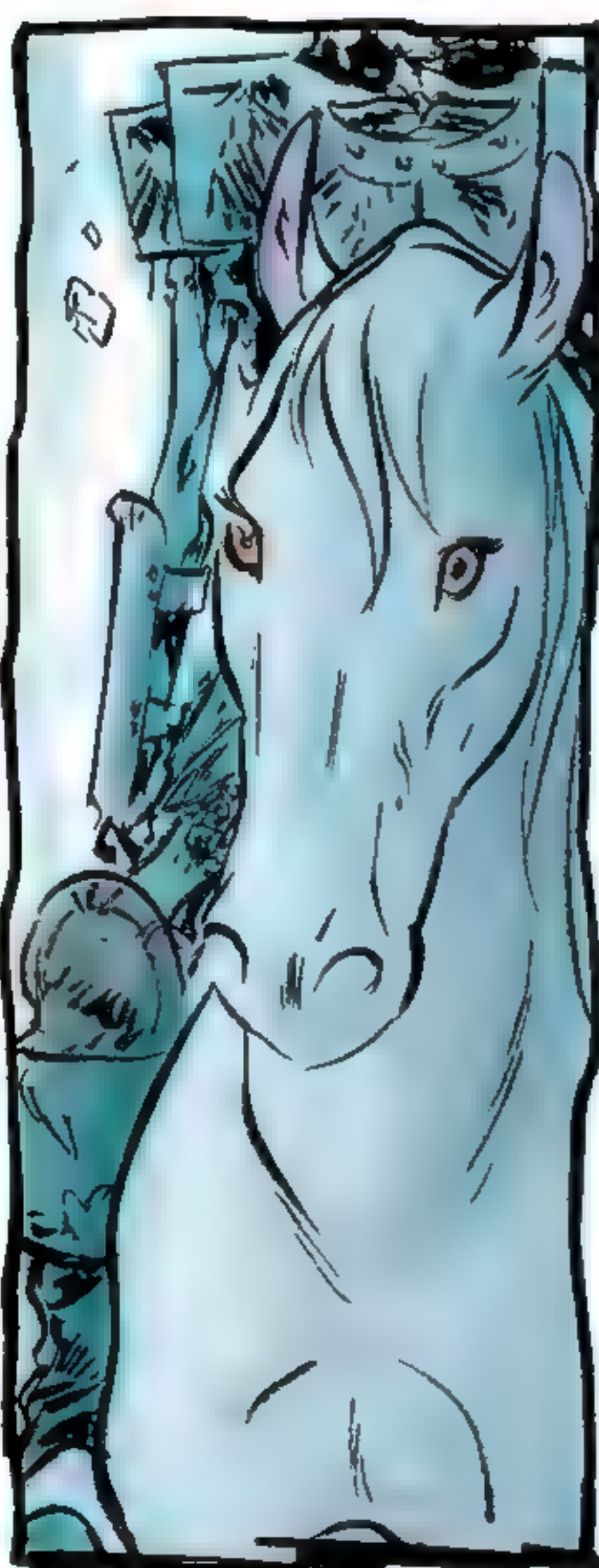
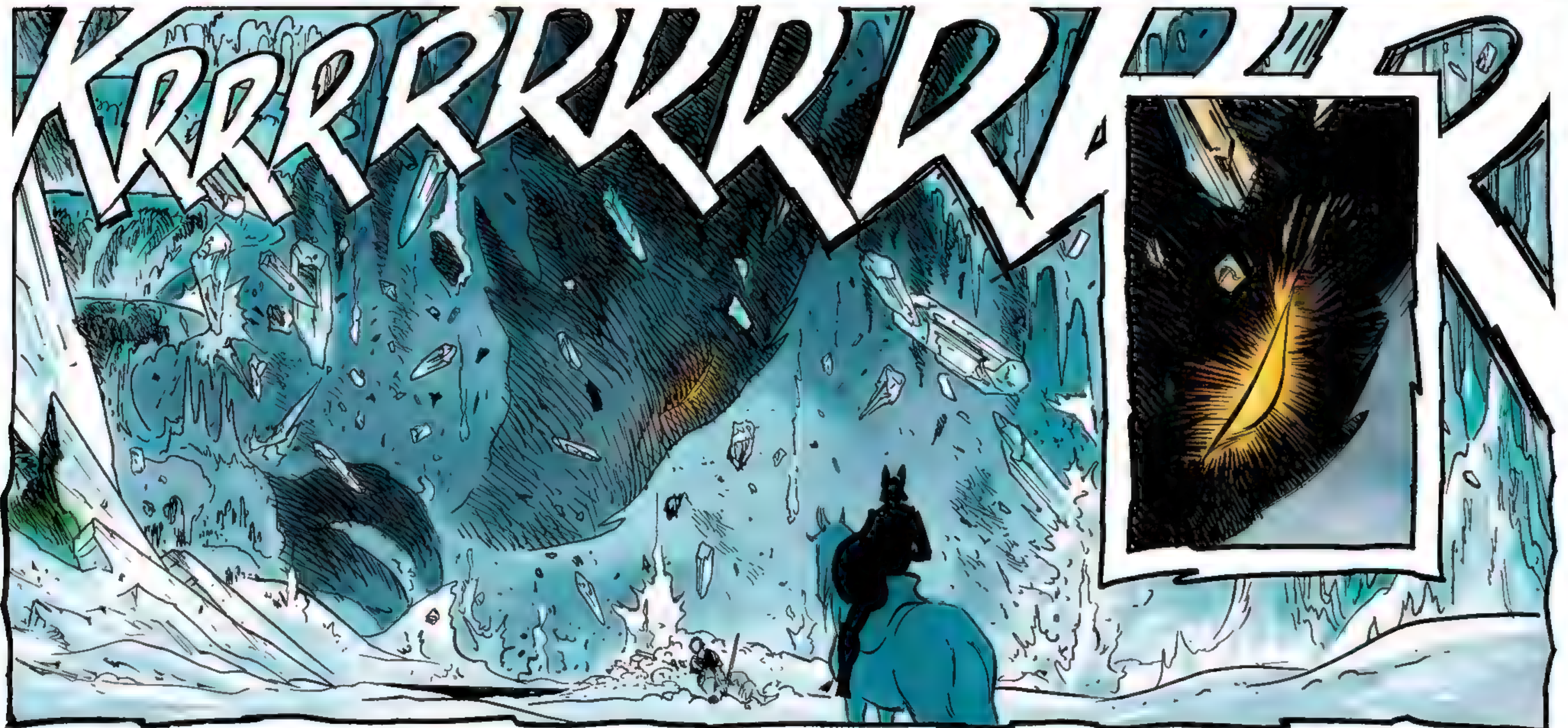
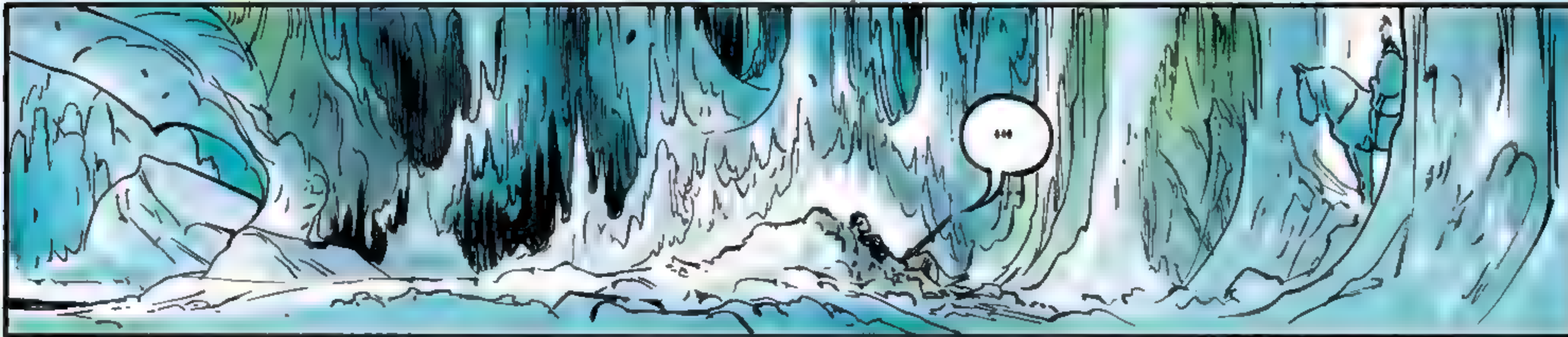
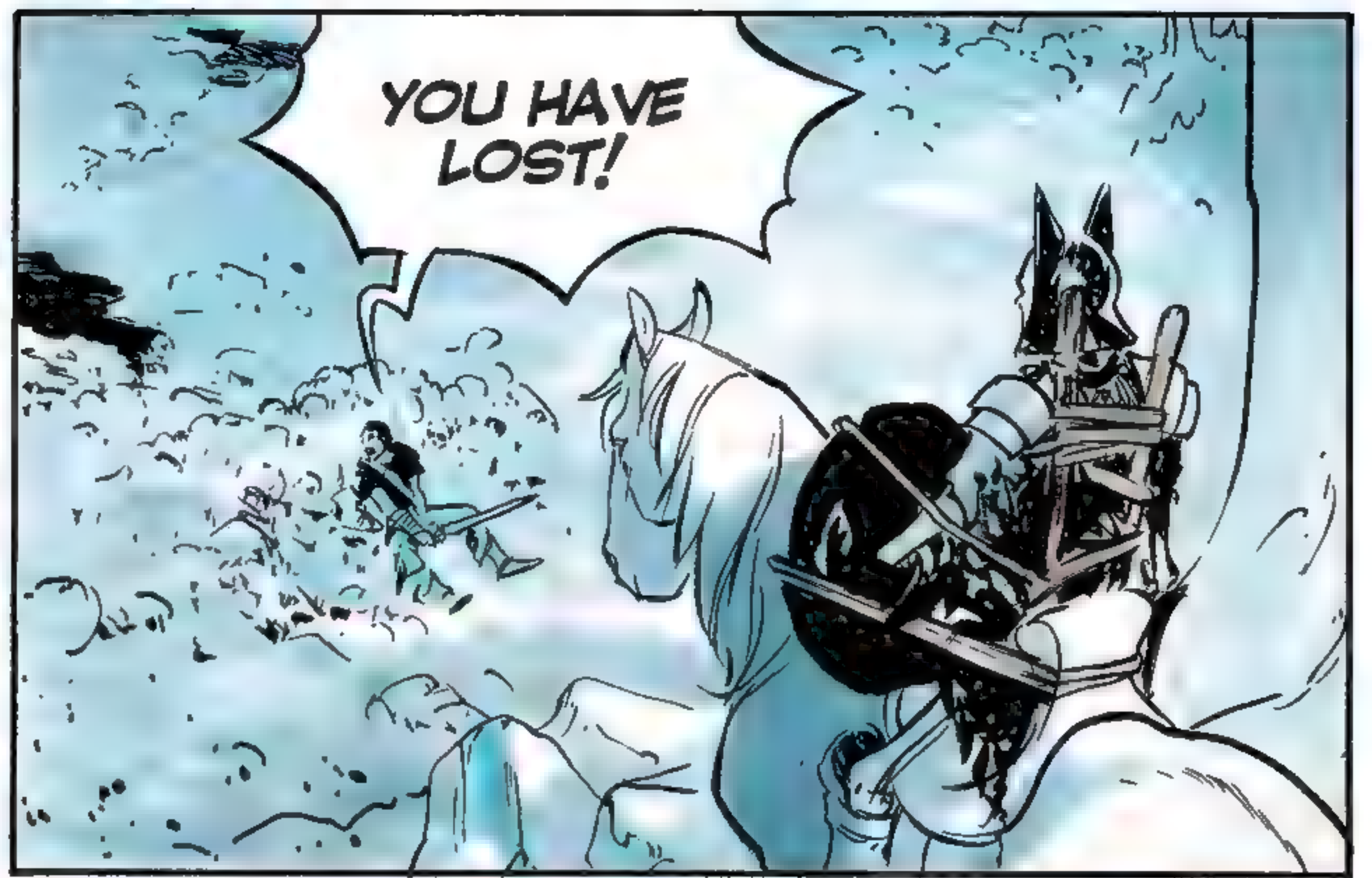
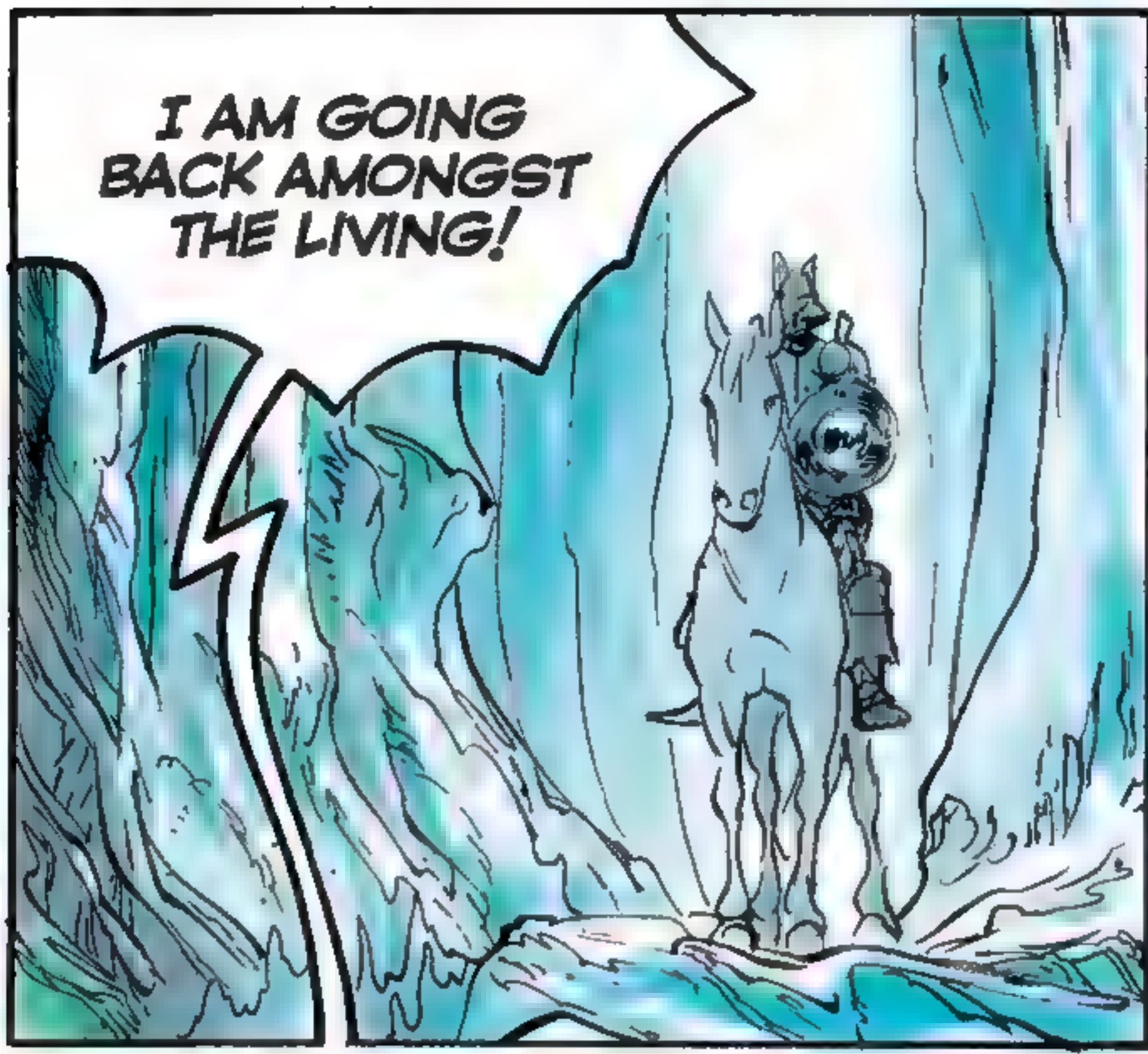
...ALL OF
THEM ARE
GATHERED
HERE.

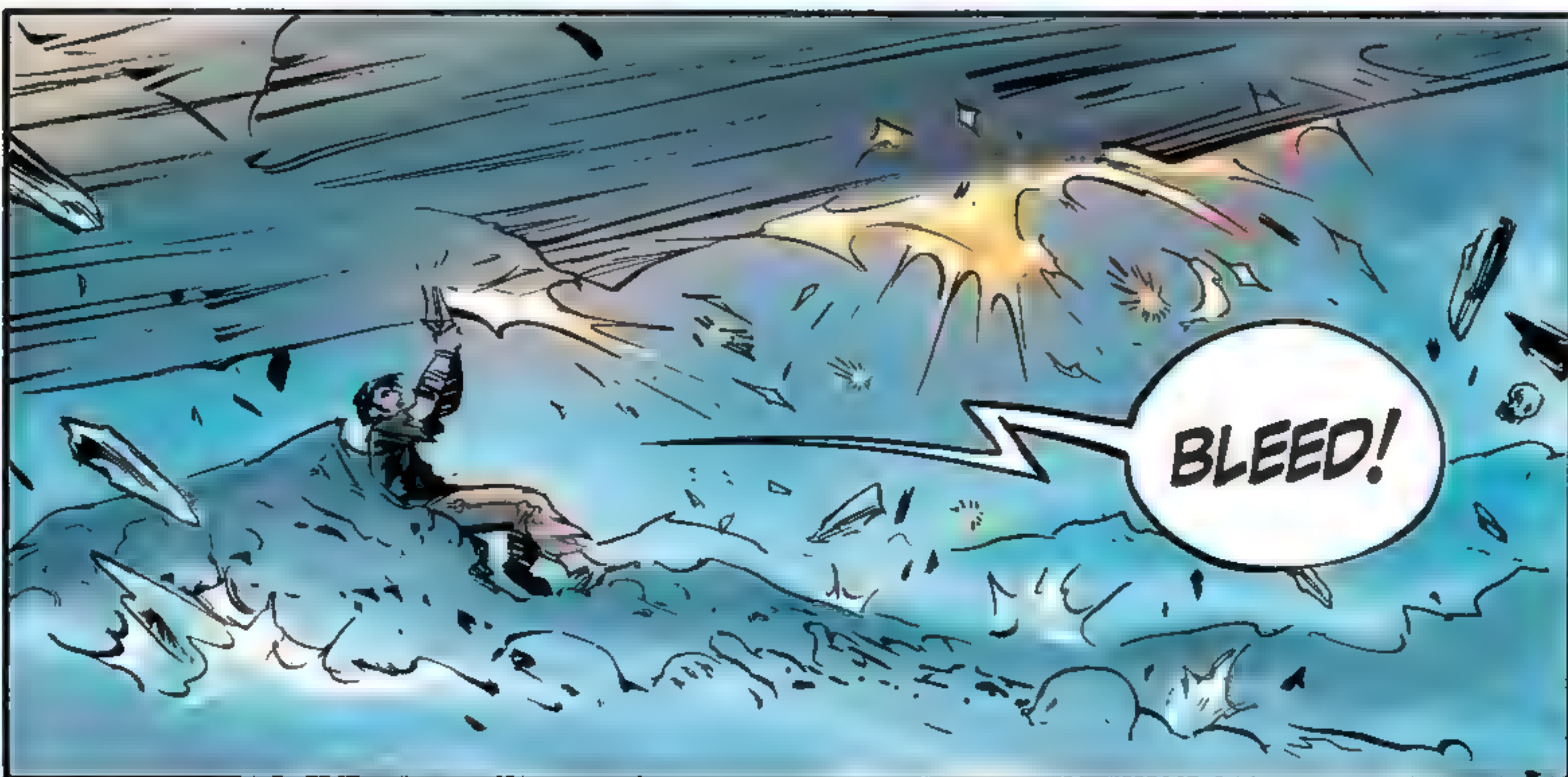
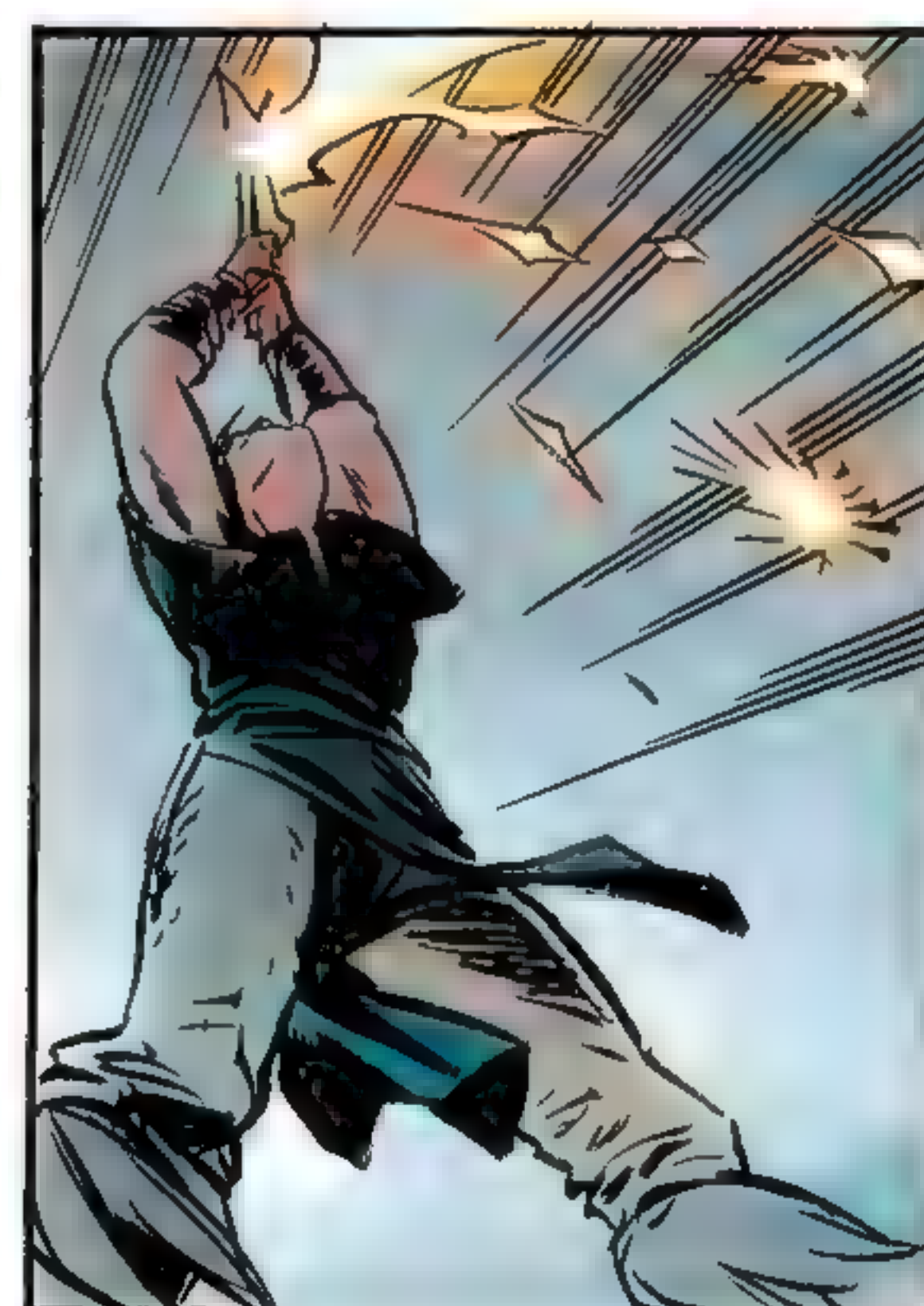
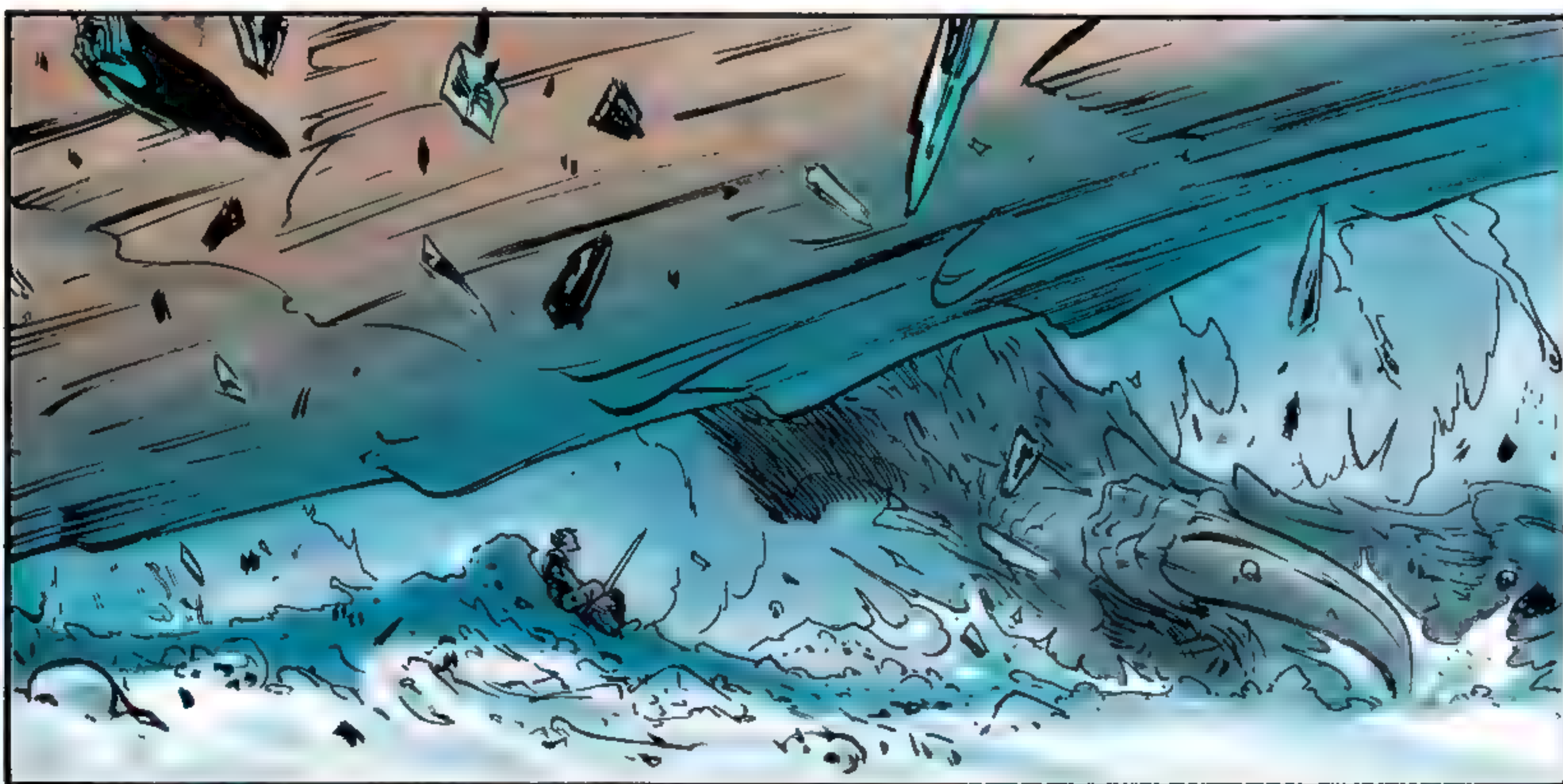
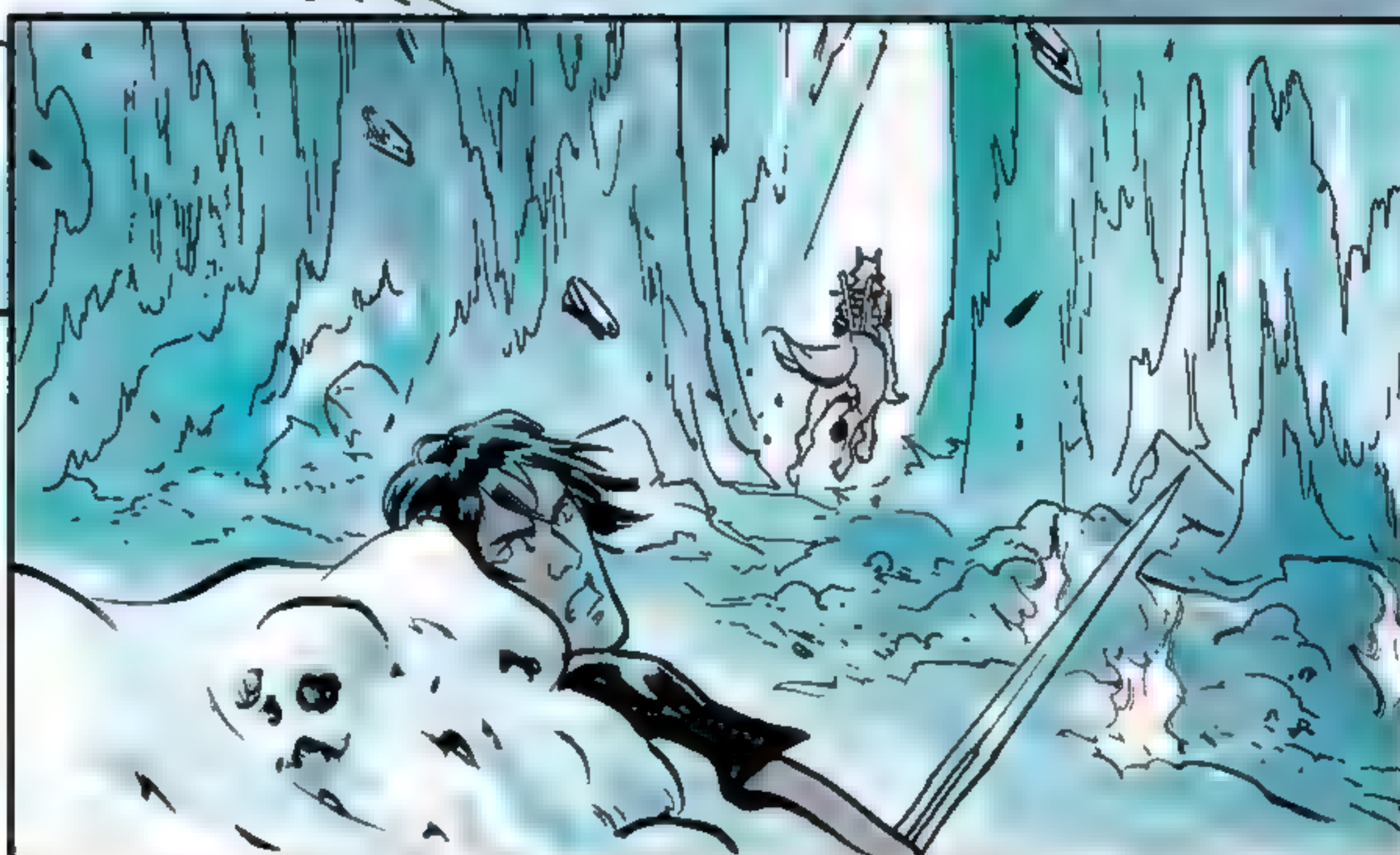


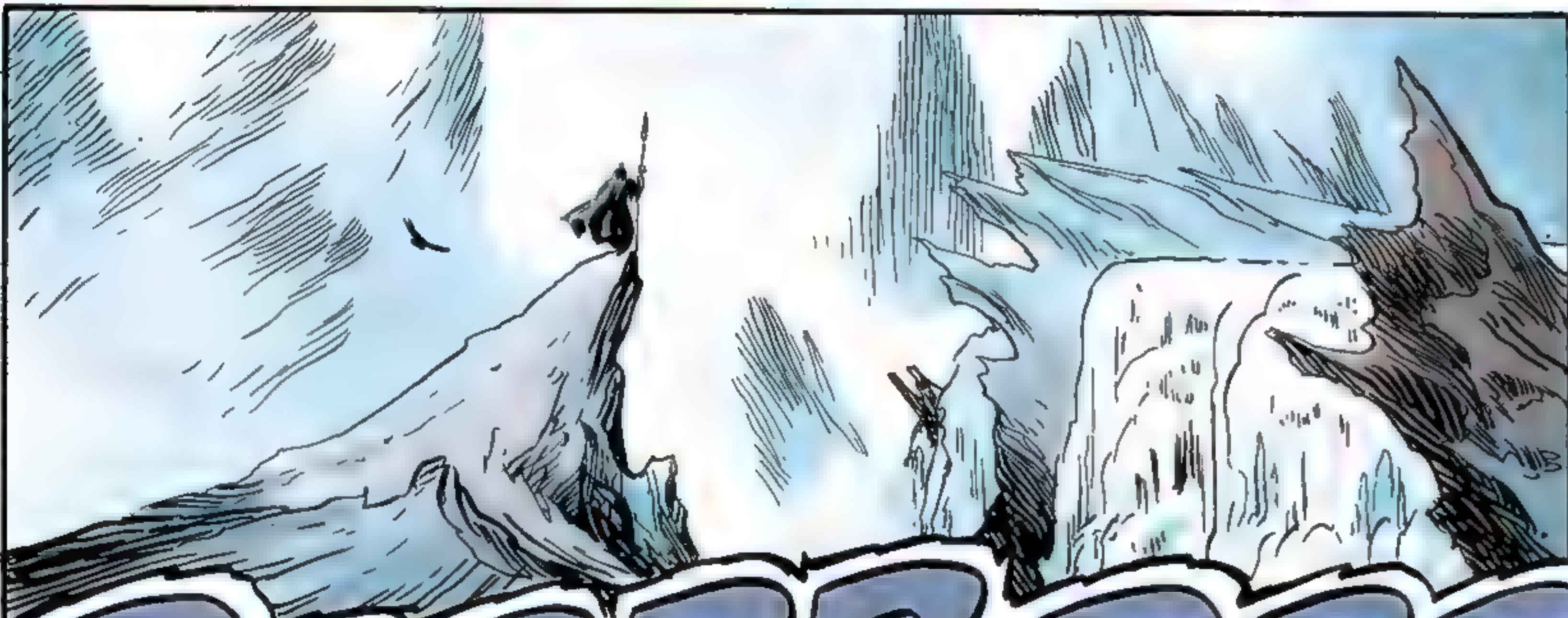
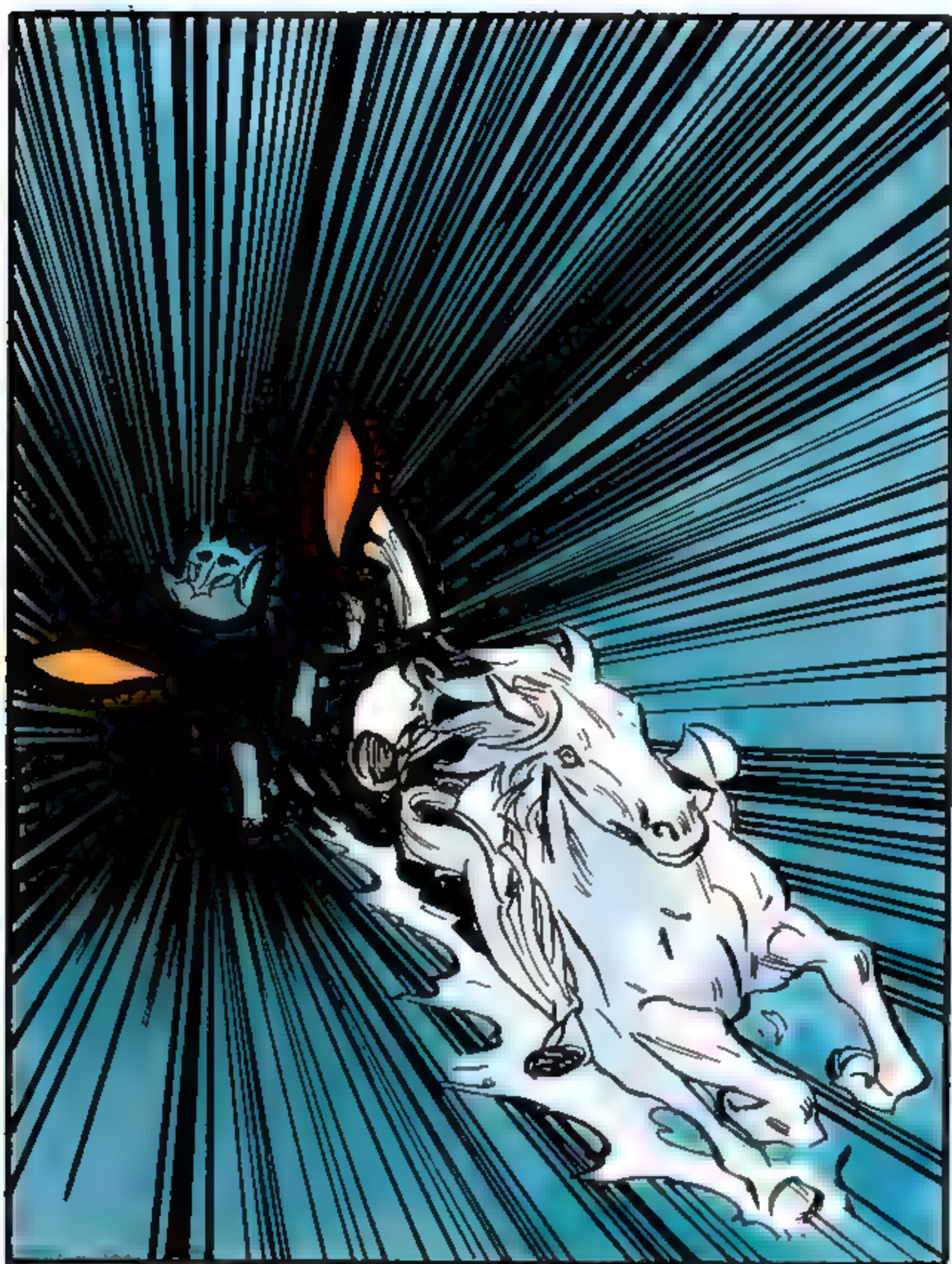
WHAT IS THE
POINT IN
GOING ANY
FURTHER?



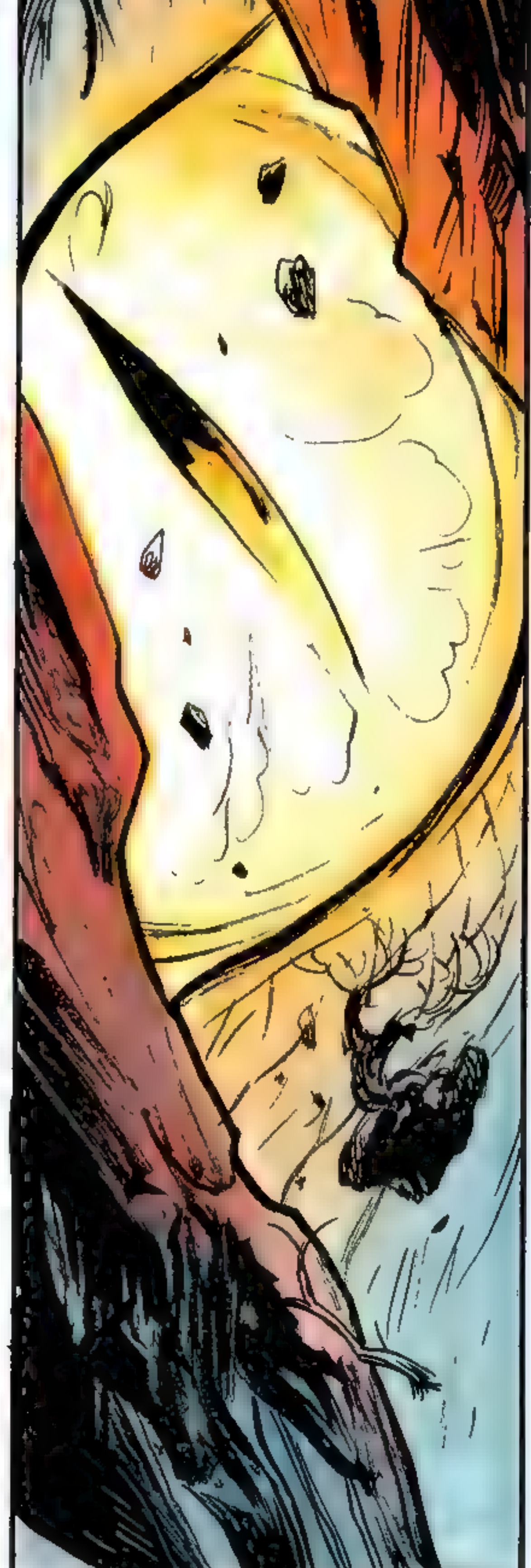
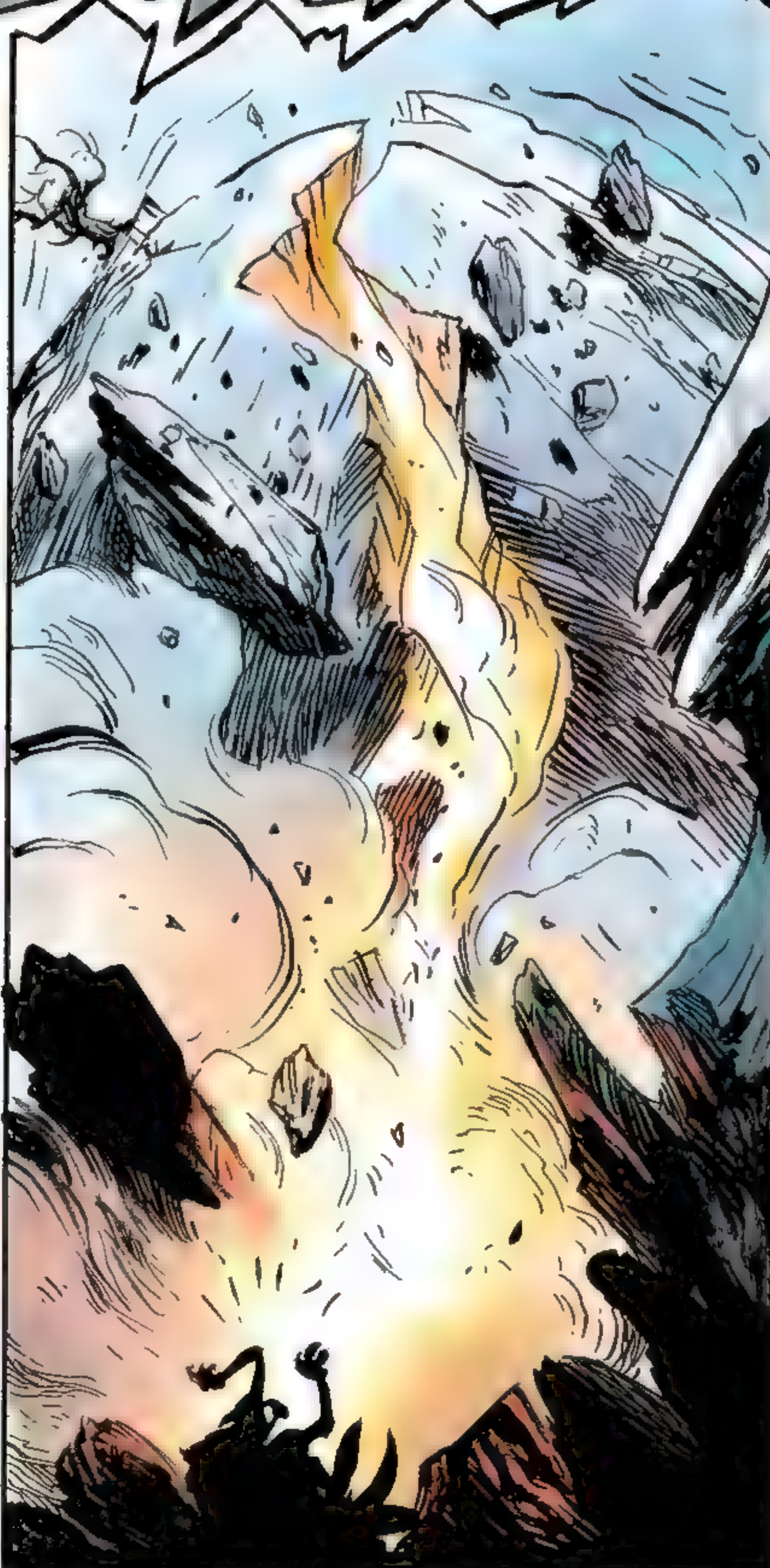
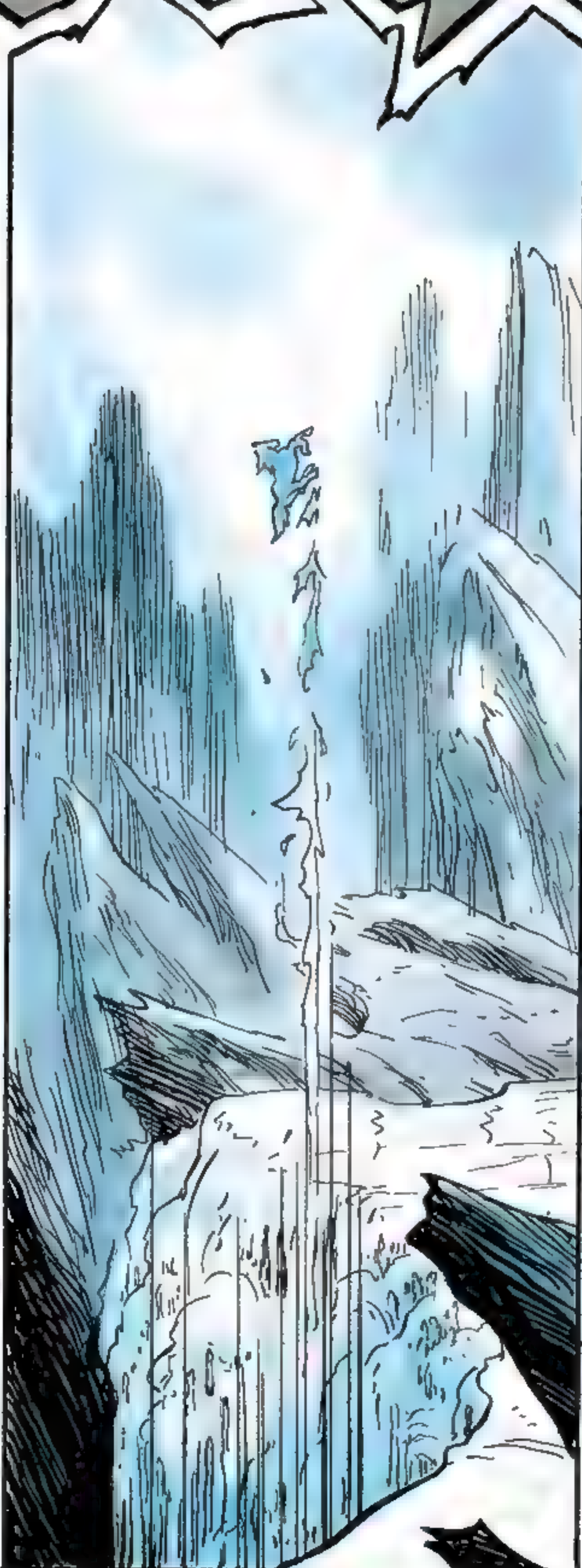
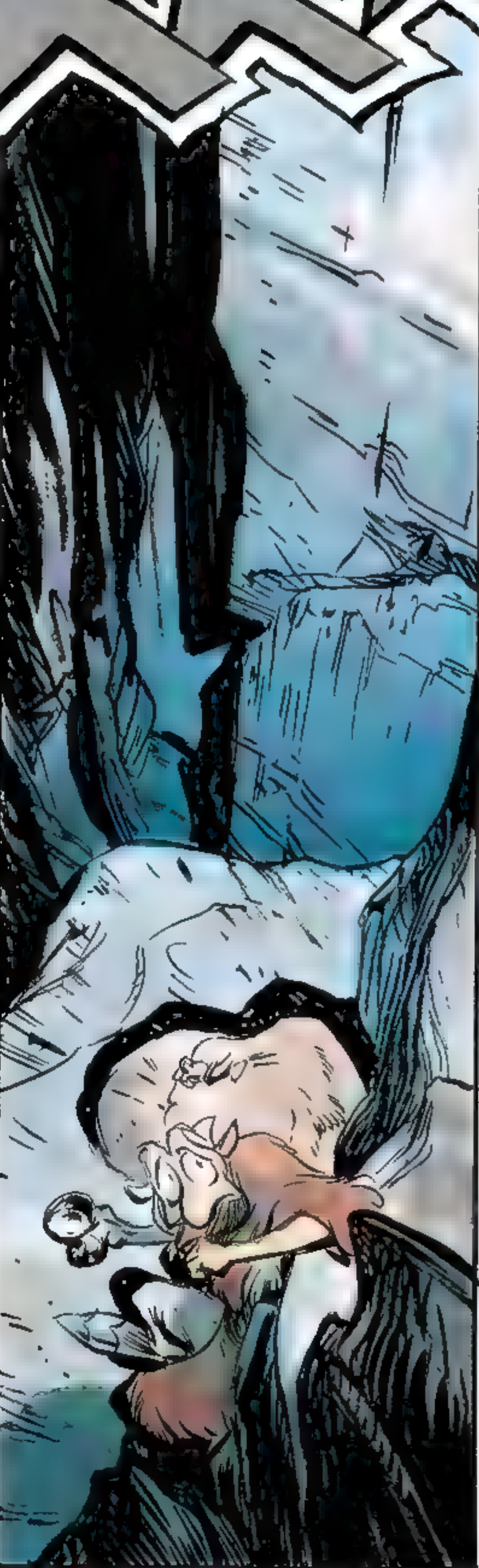




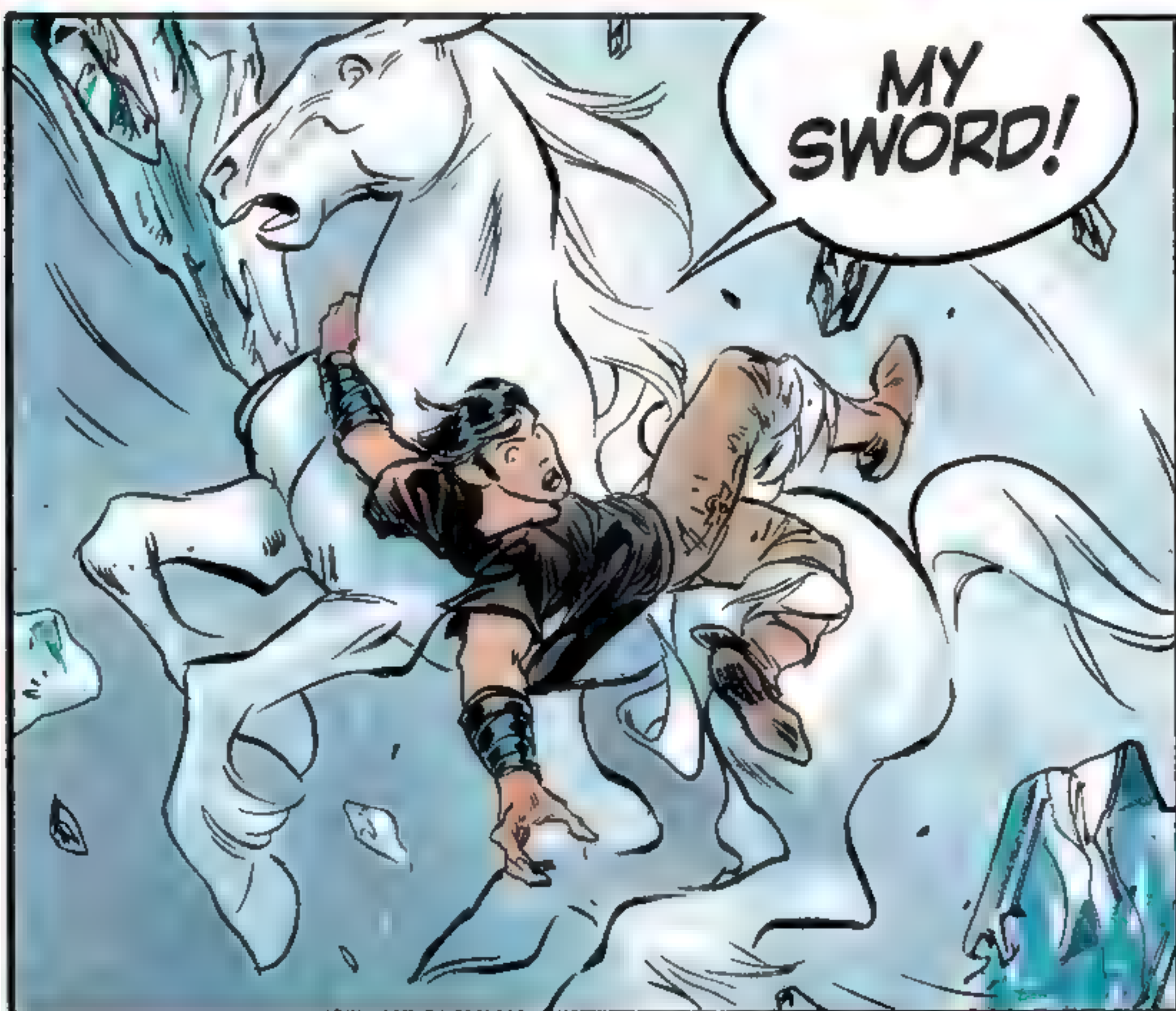
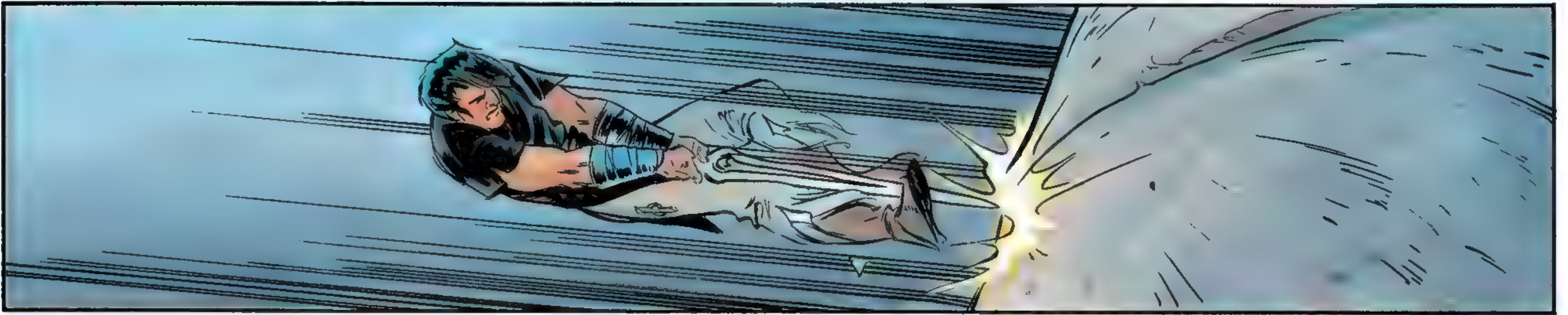
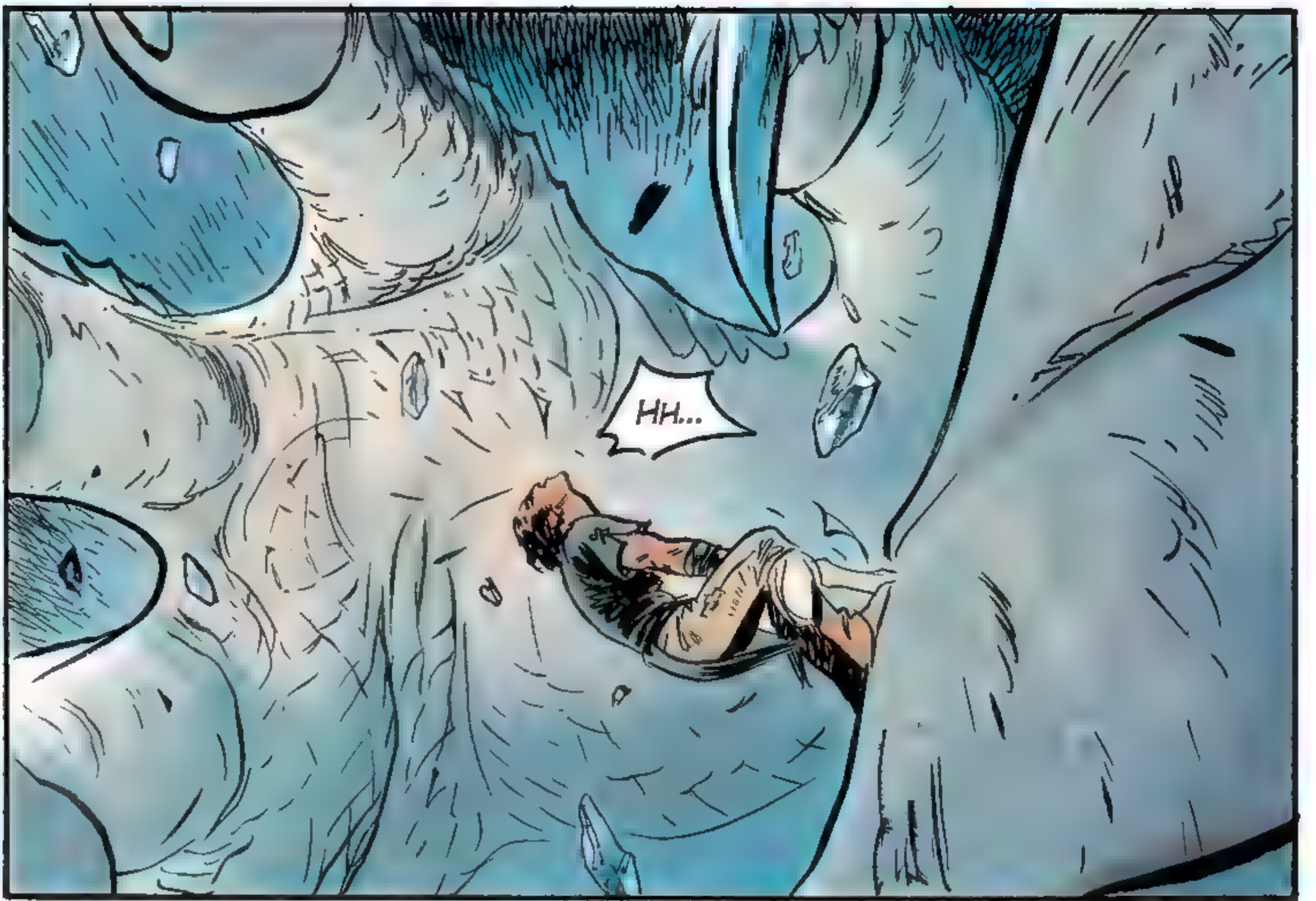
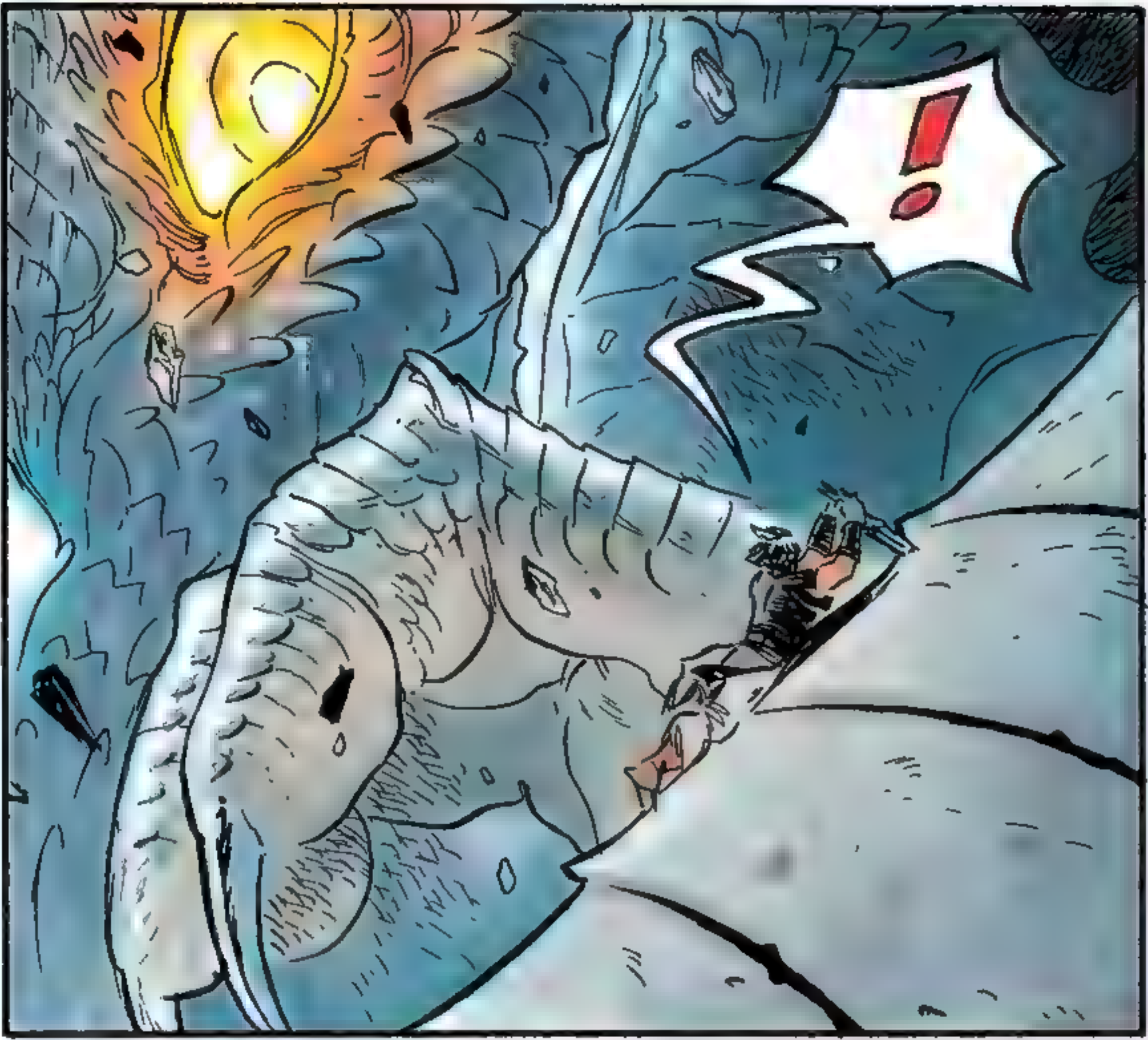


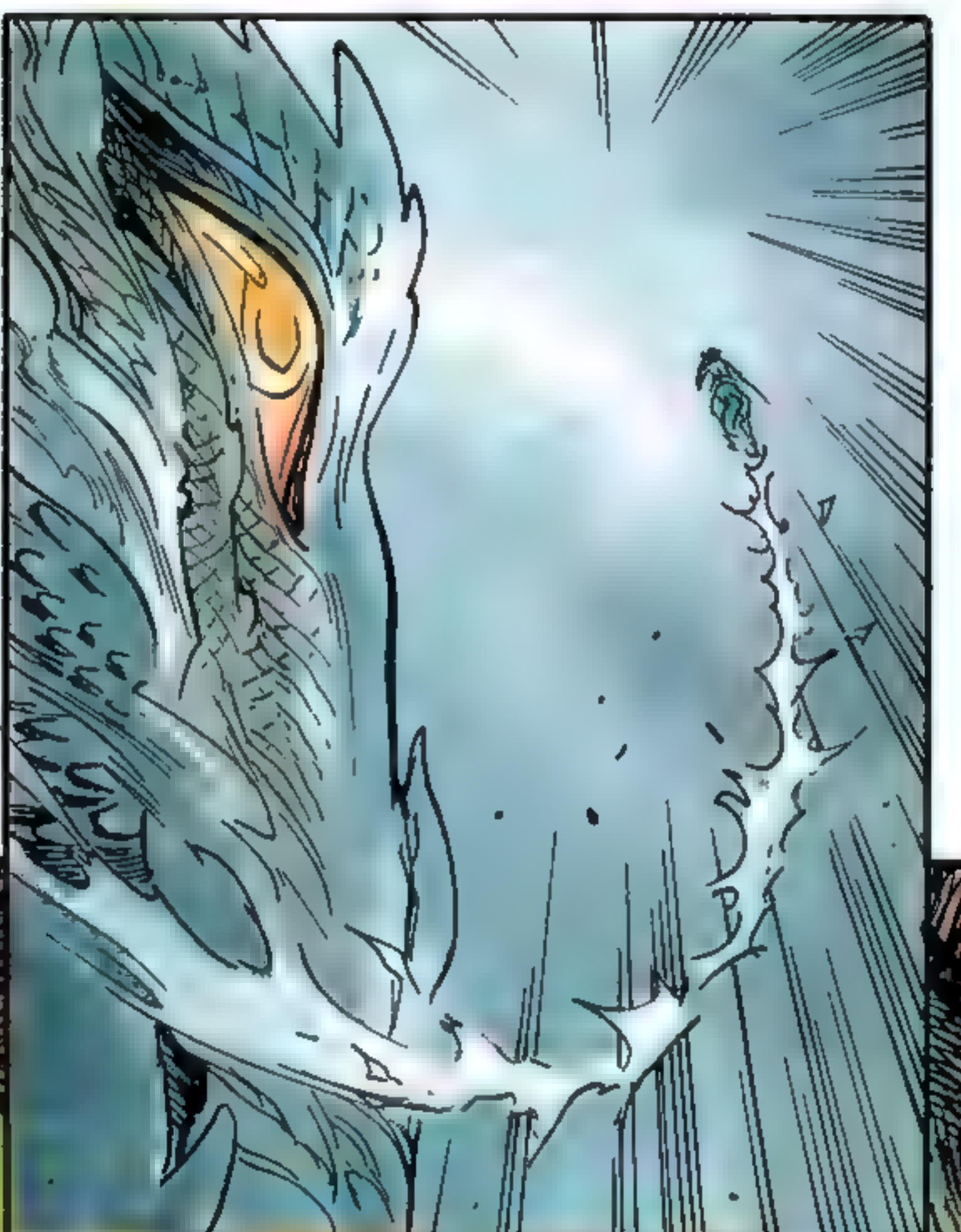
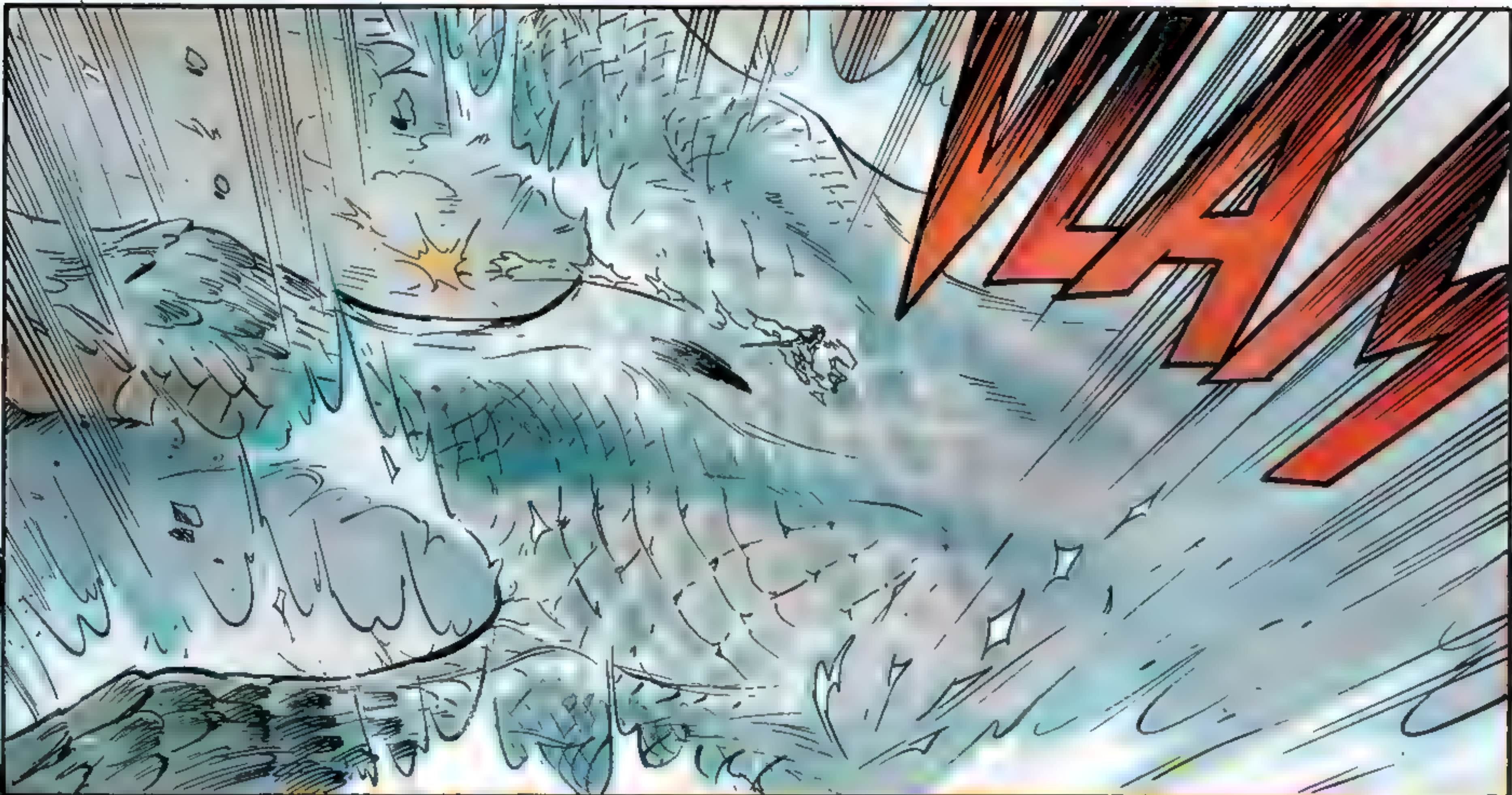
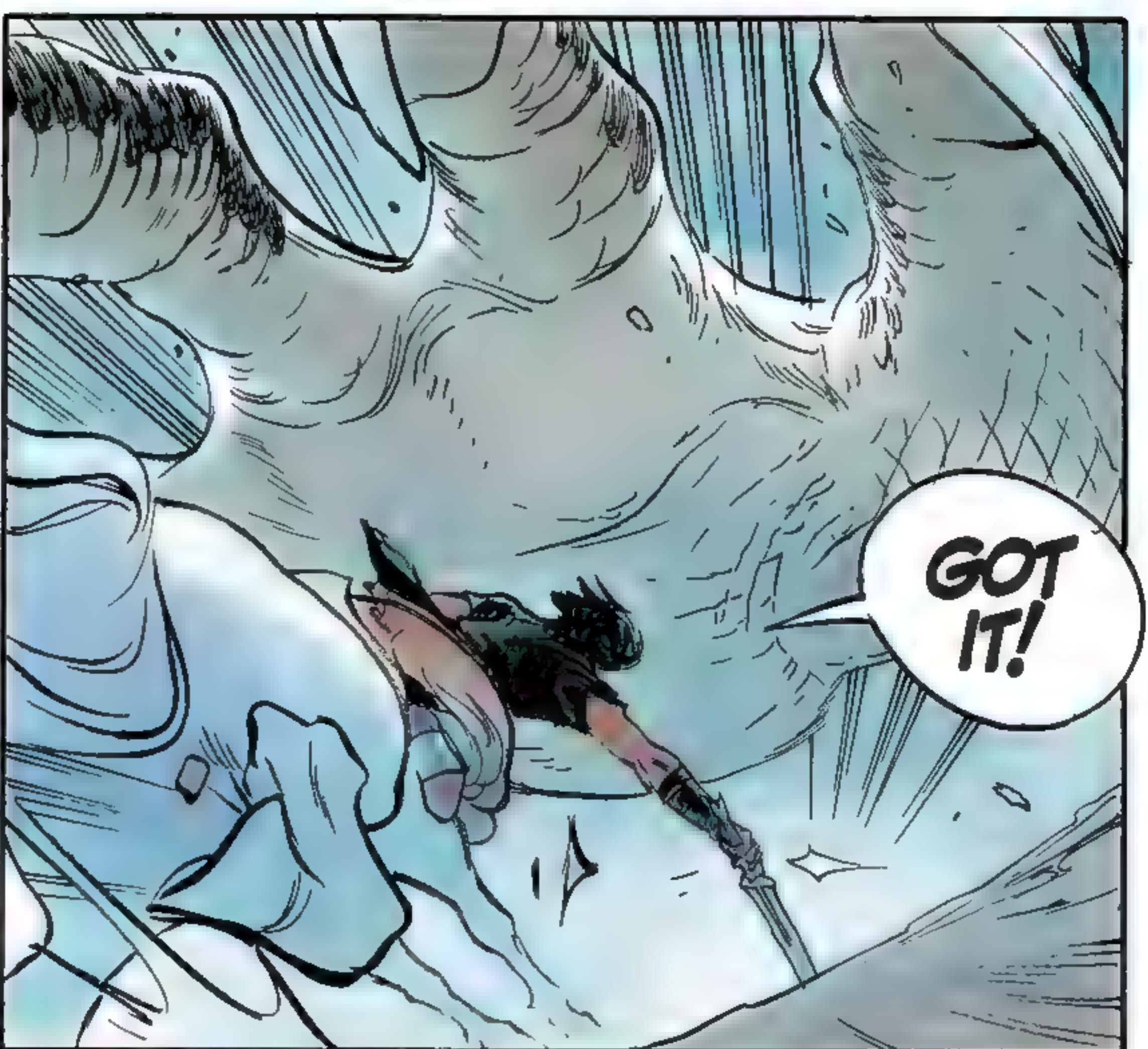
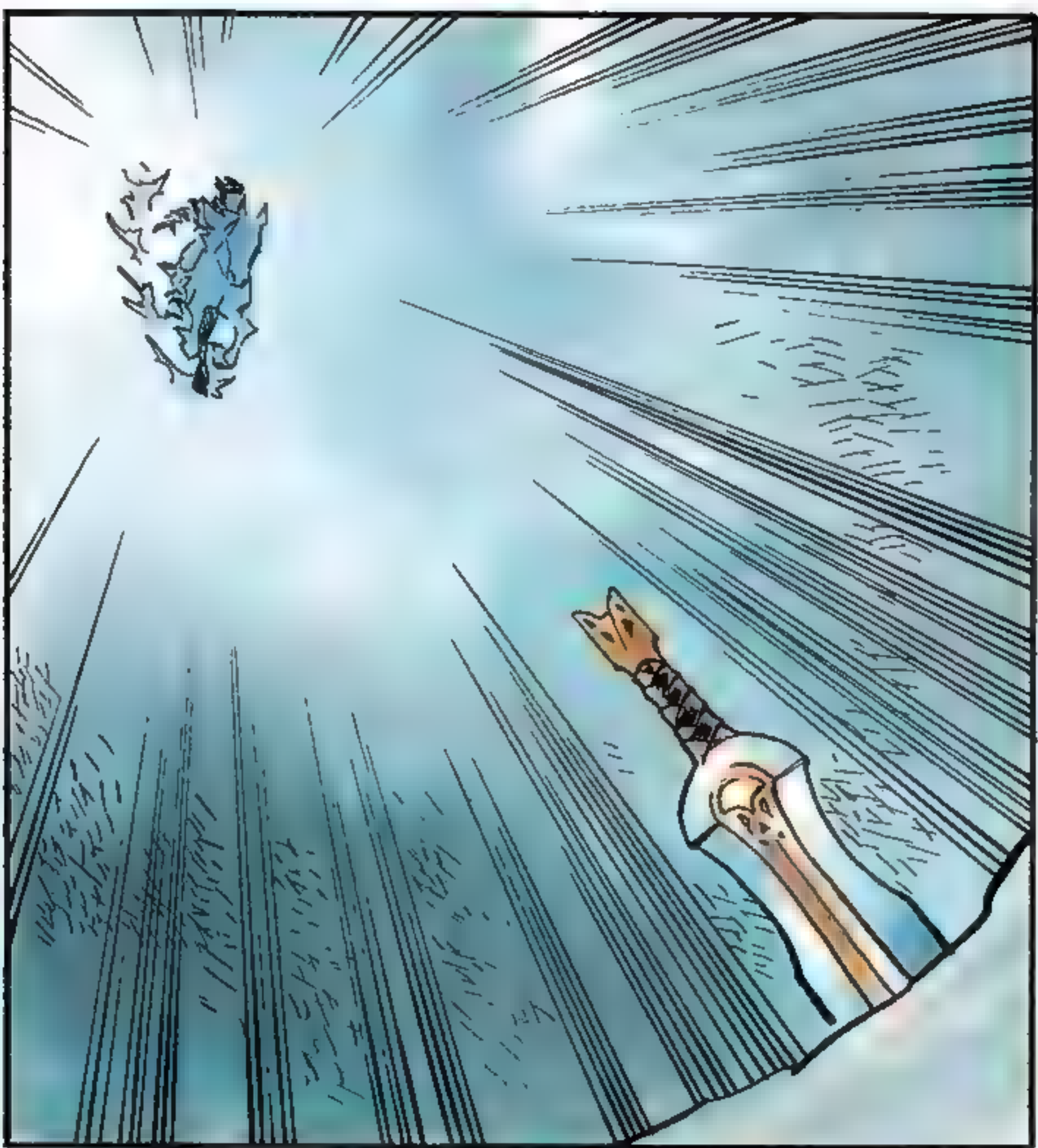
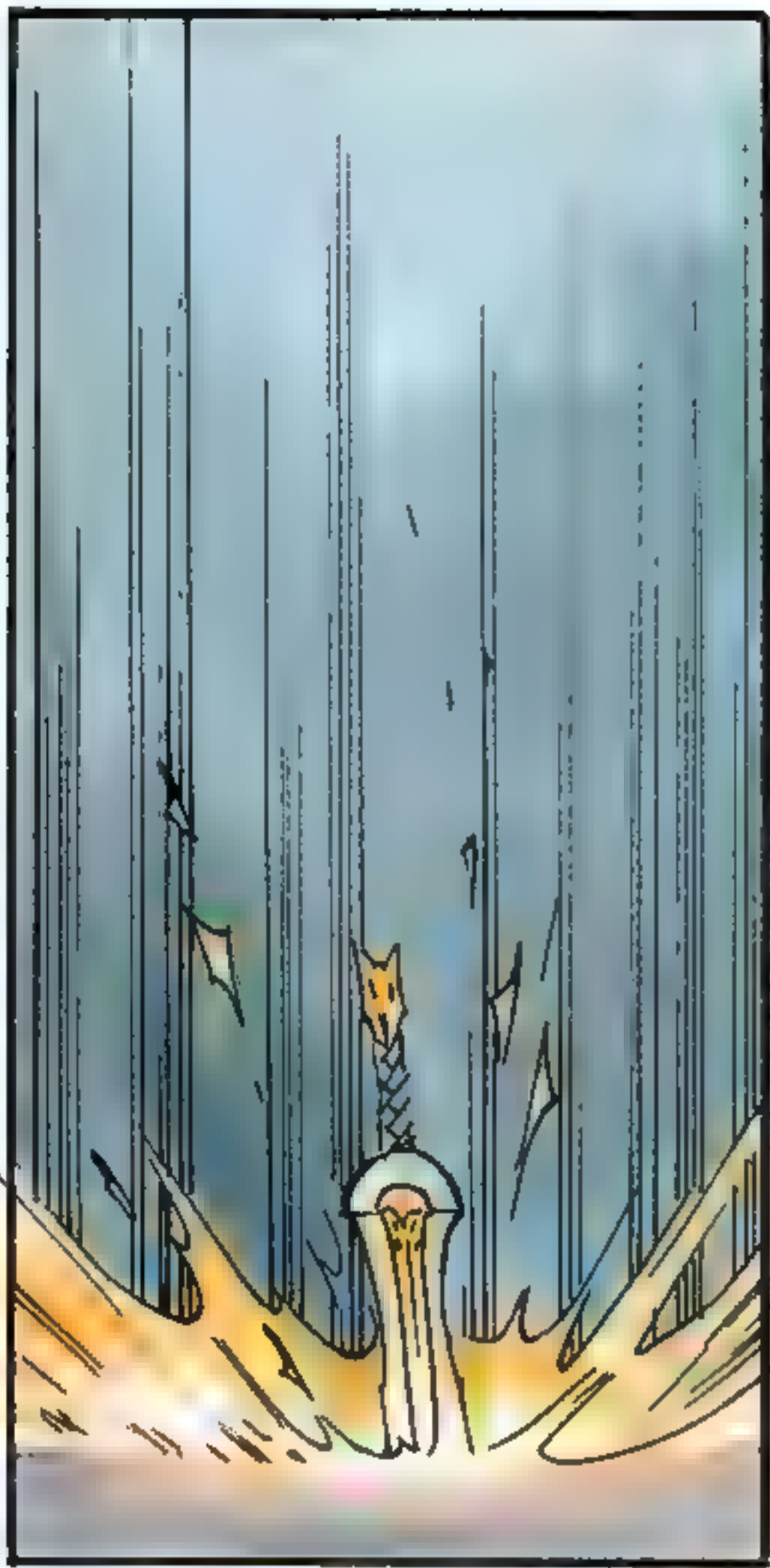


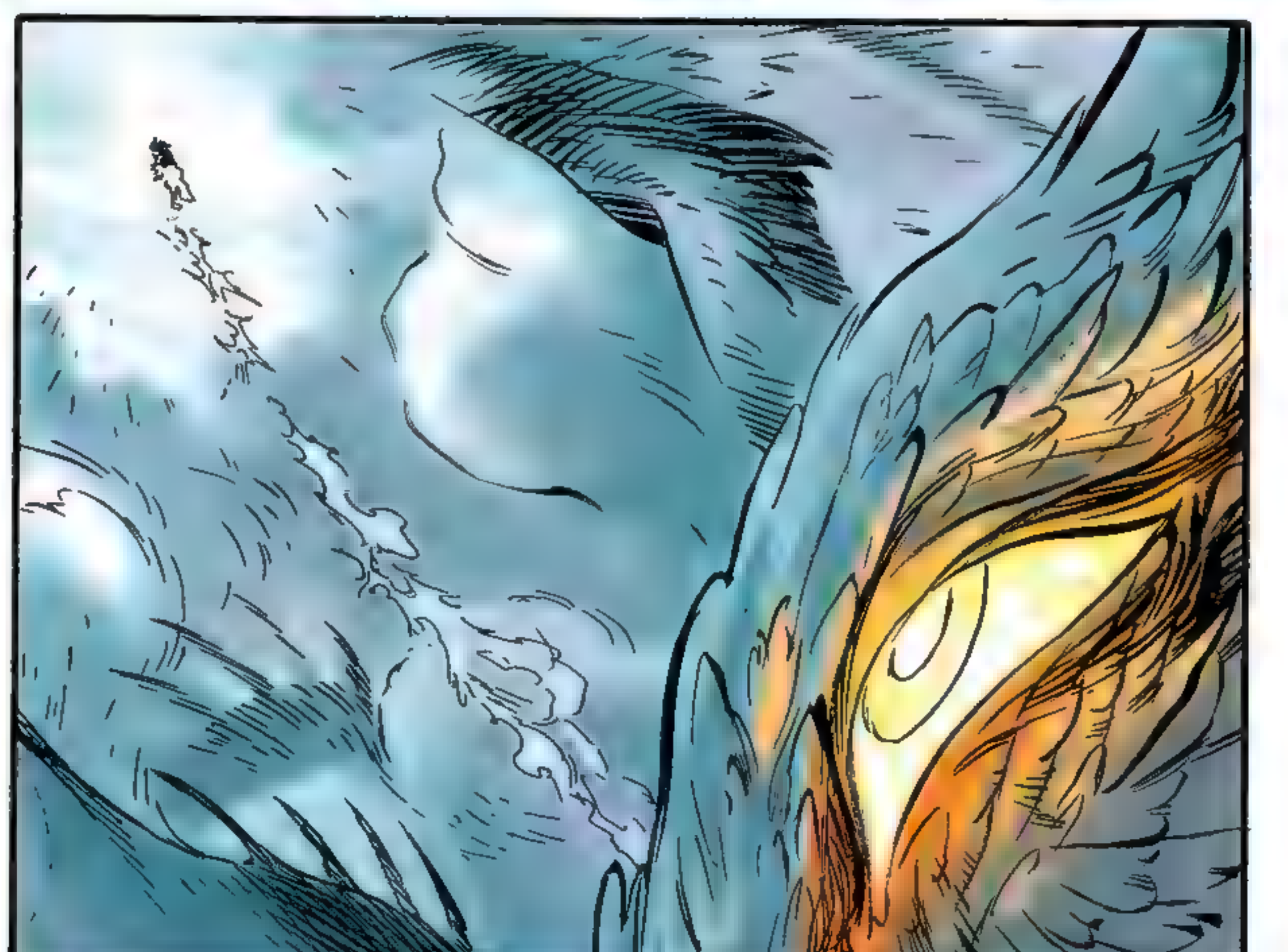
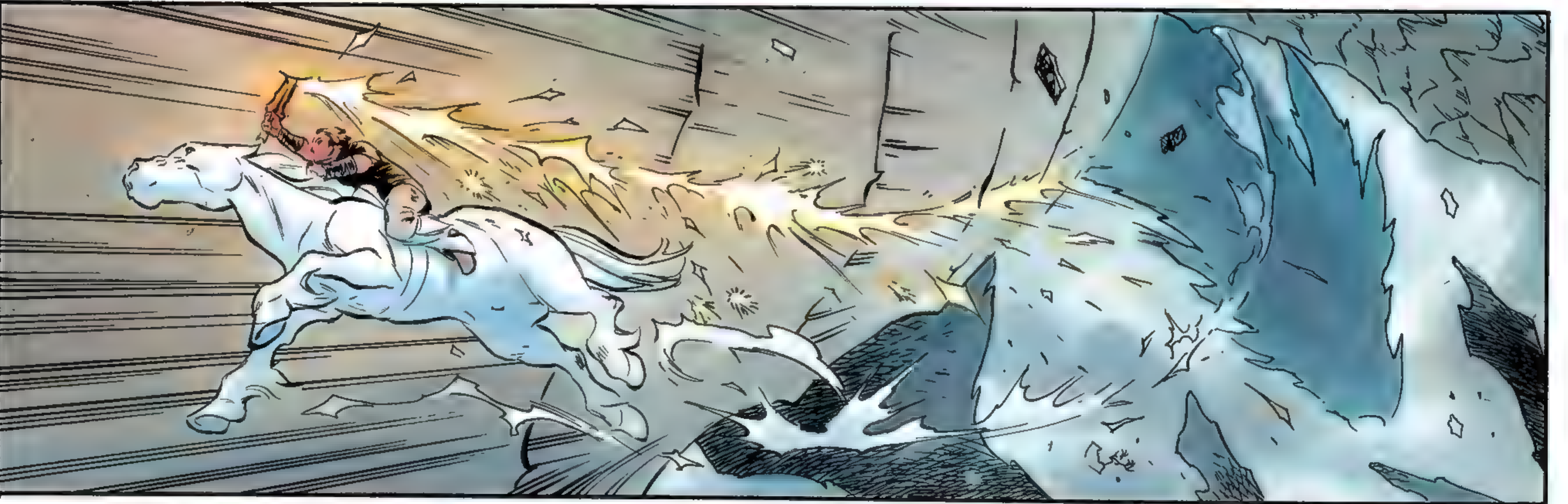
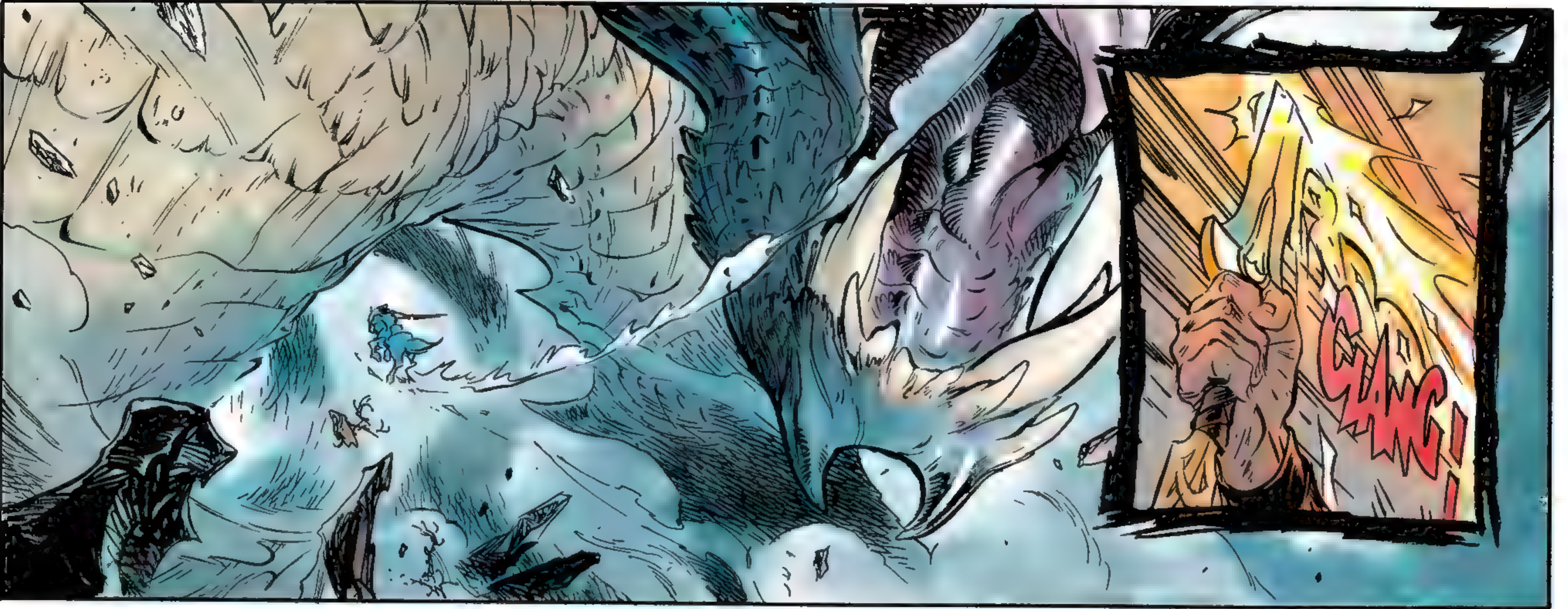
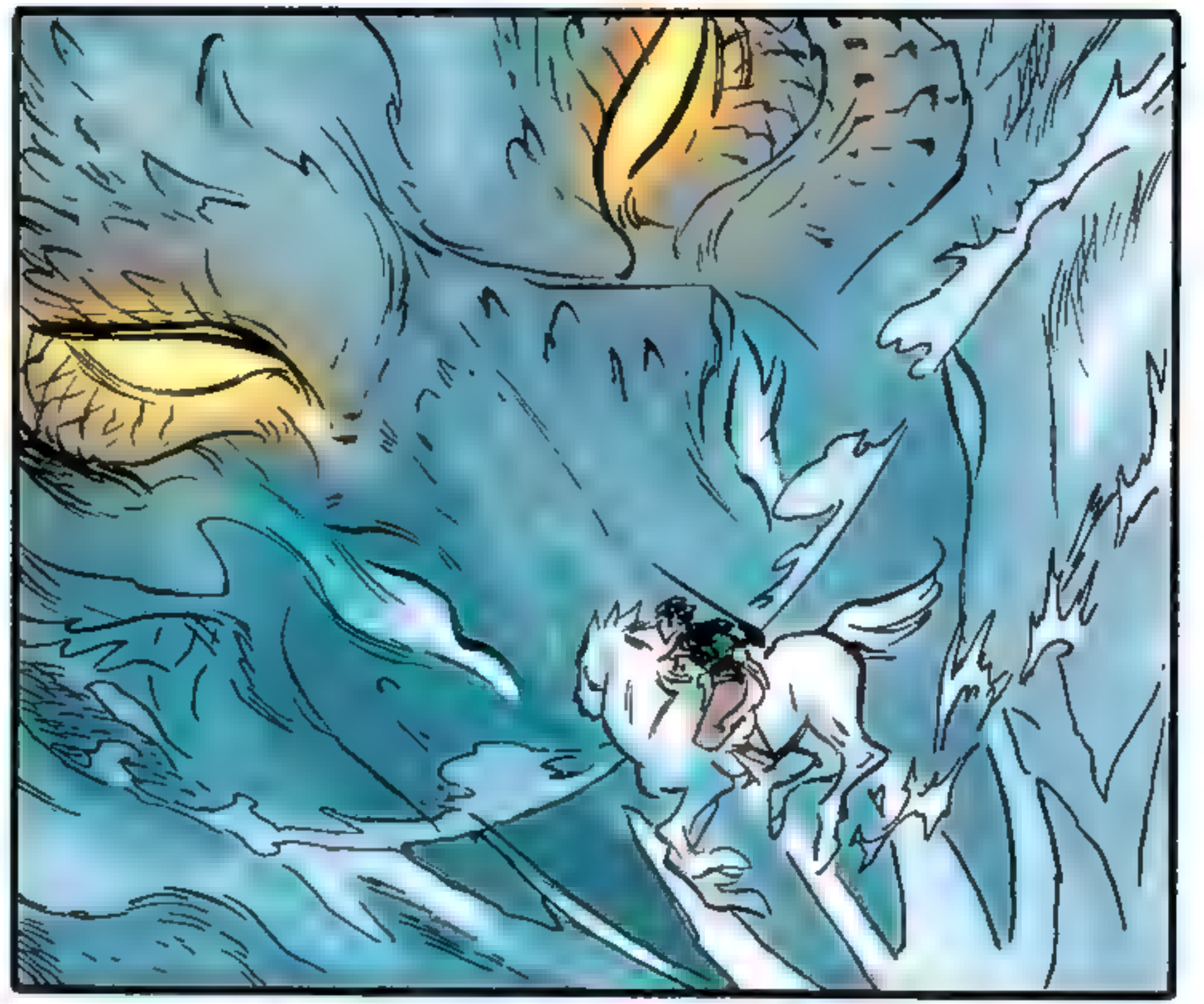
A large, stylized sound effect 'RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR' in a jagged, jagged font, set against a background of a mountain landscape with a waterfall and a person's arm.

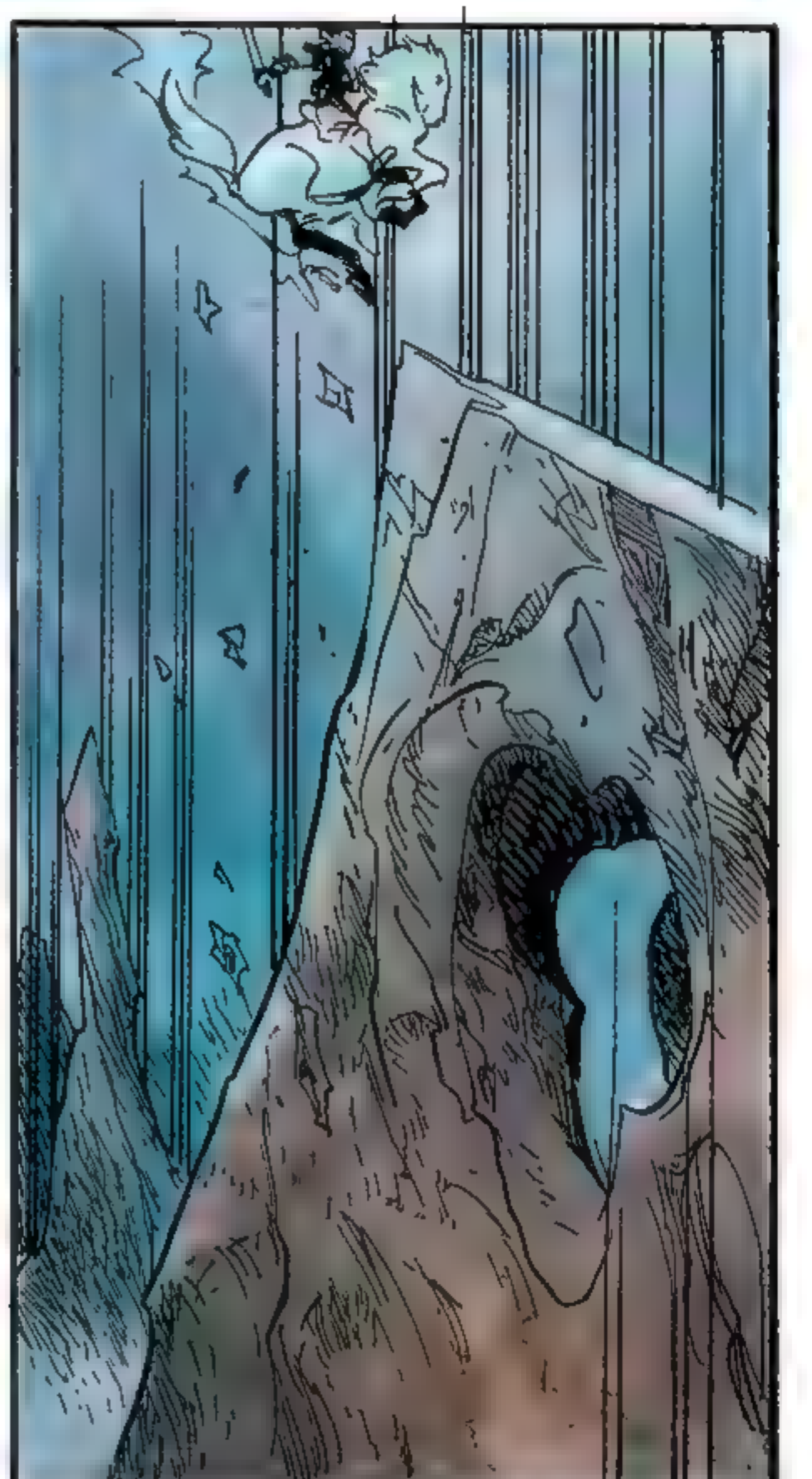
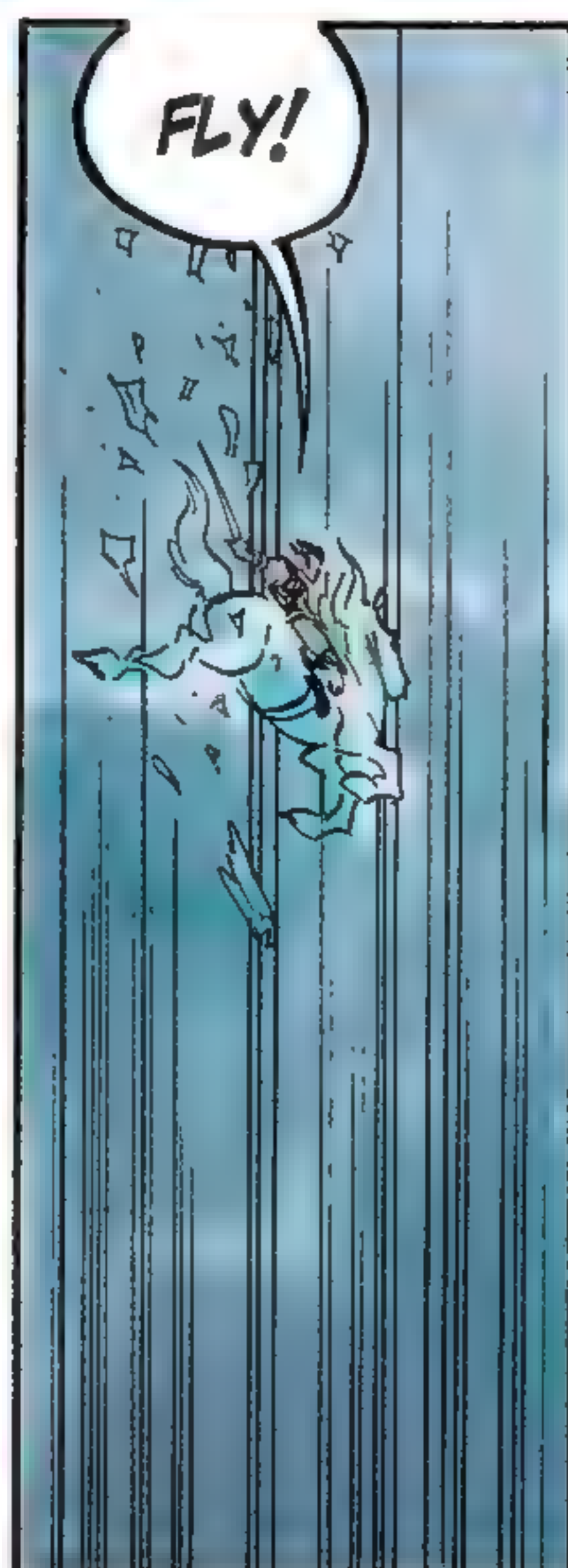
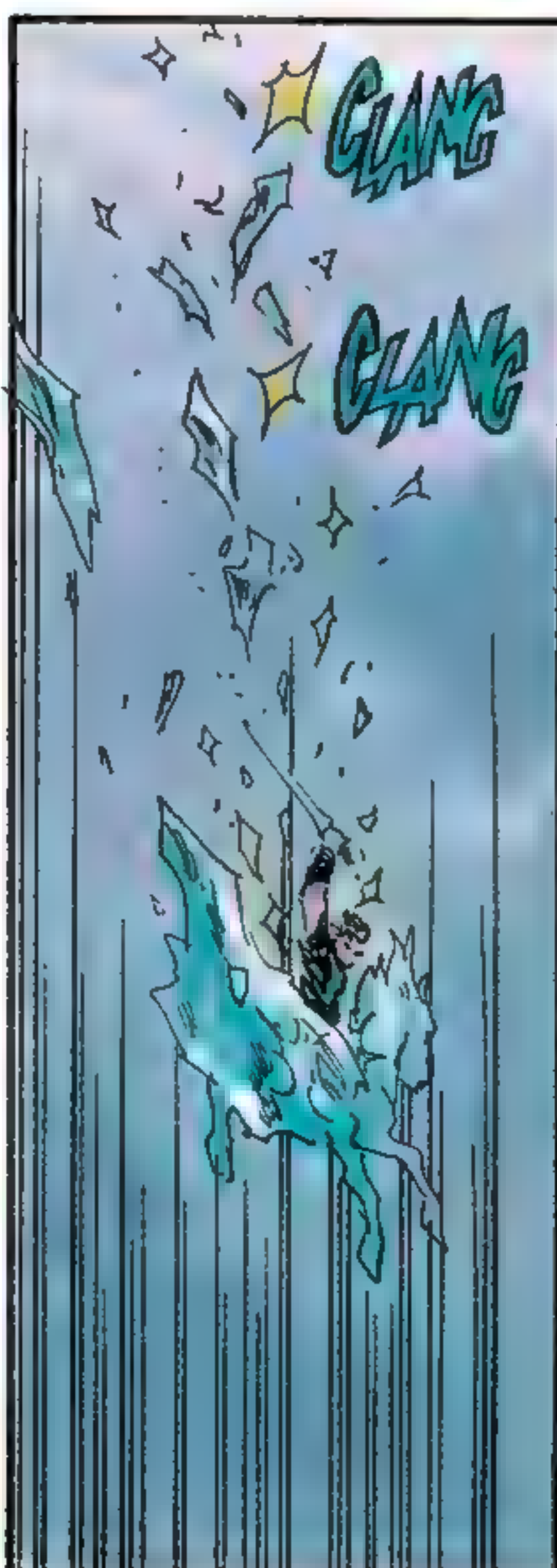
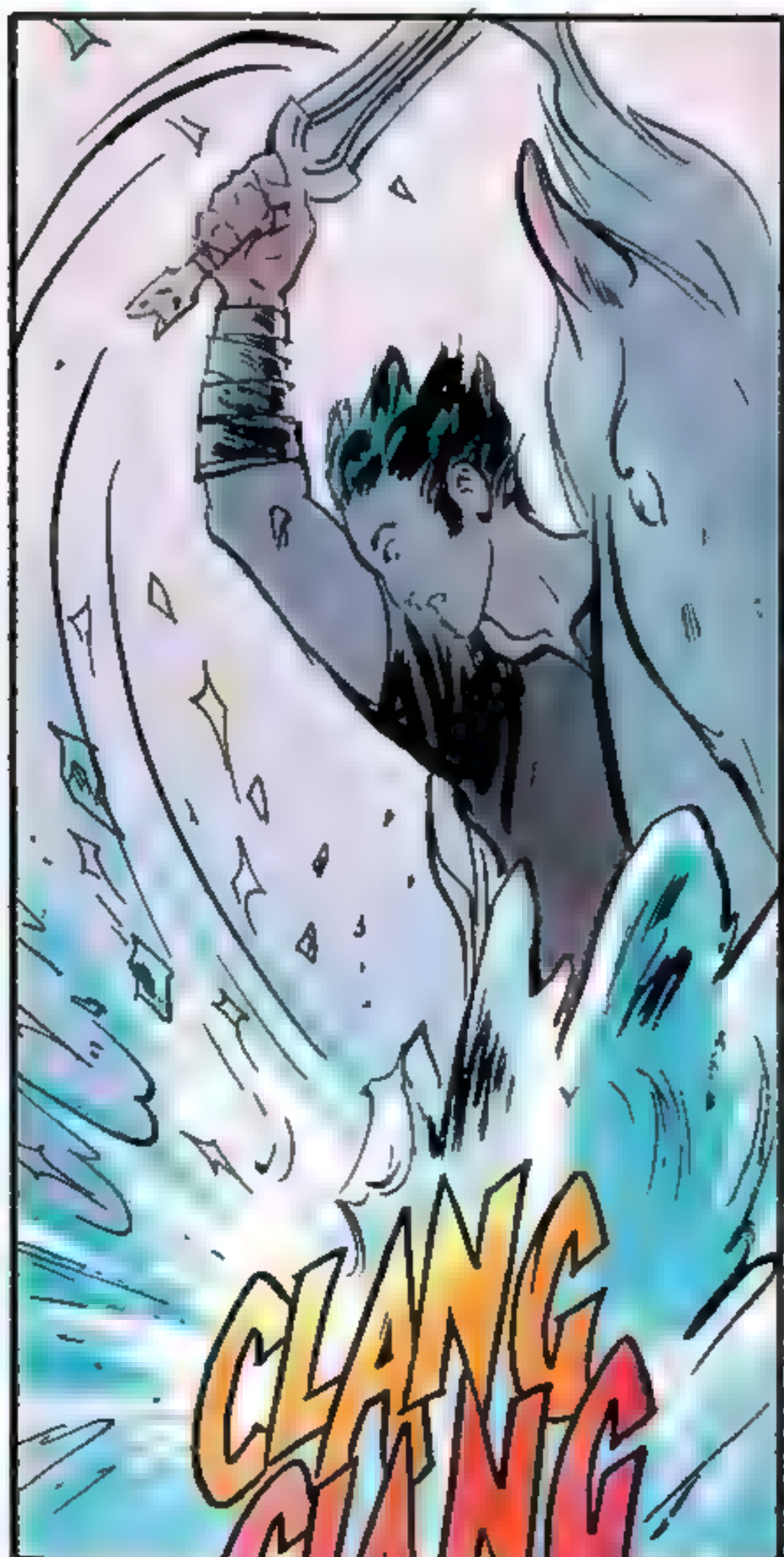
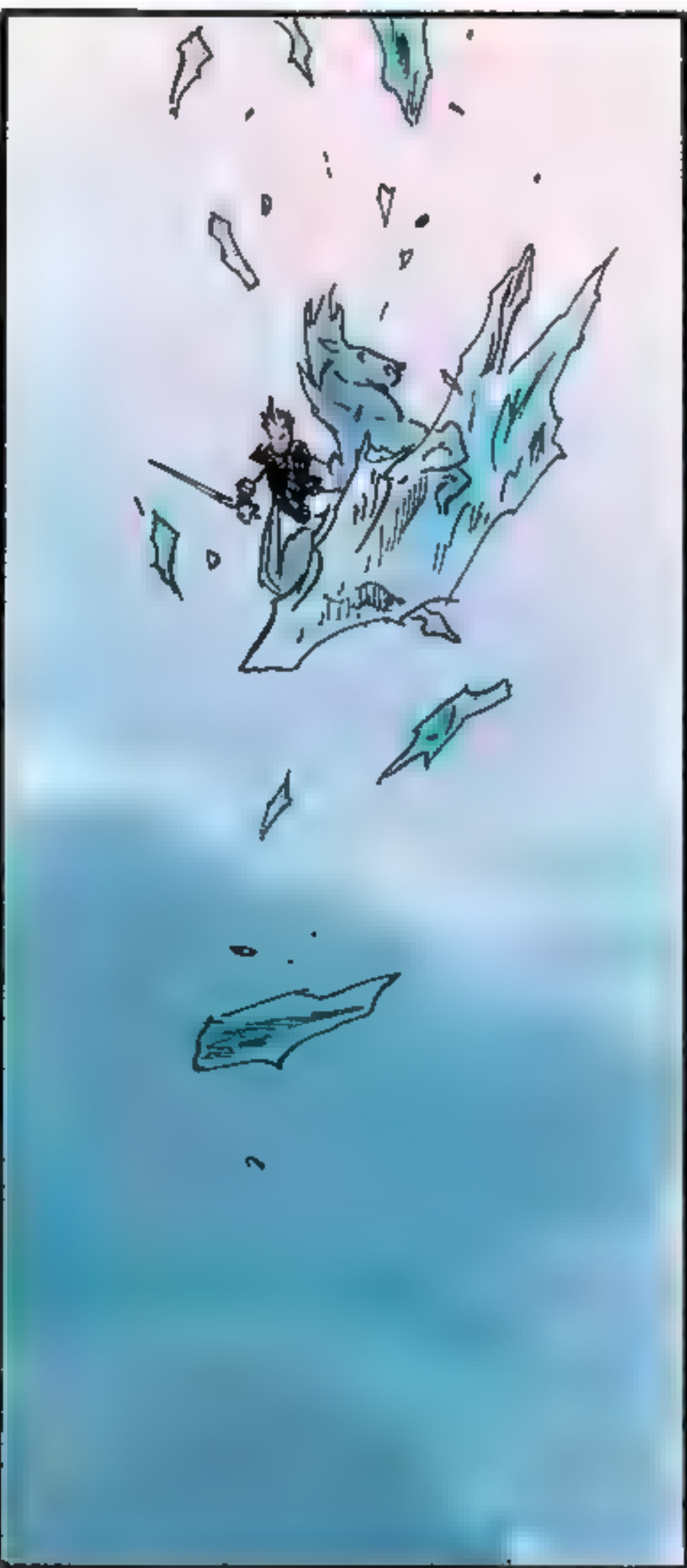
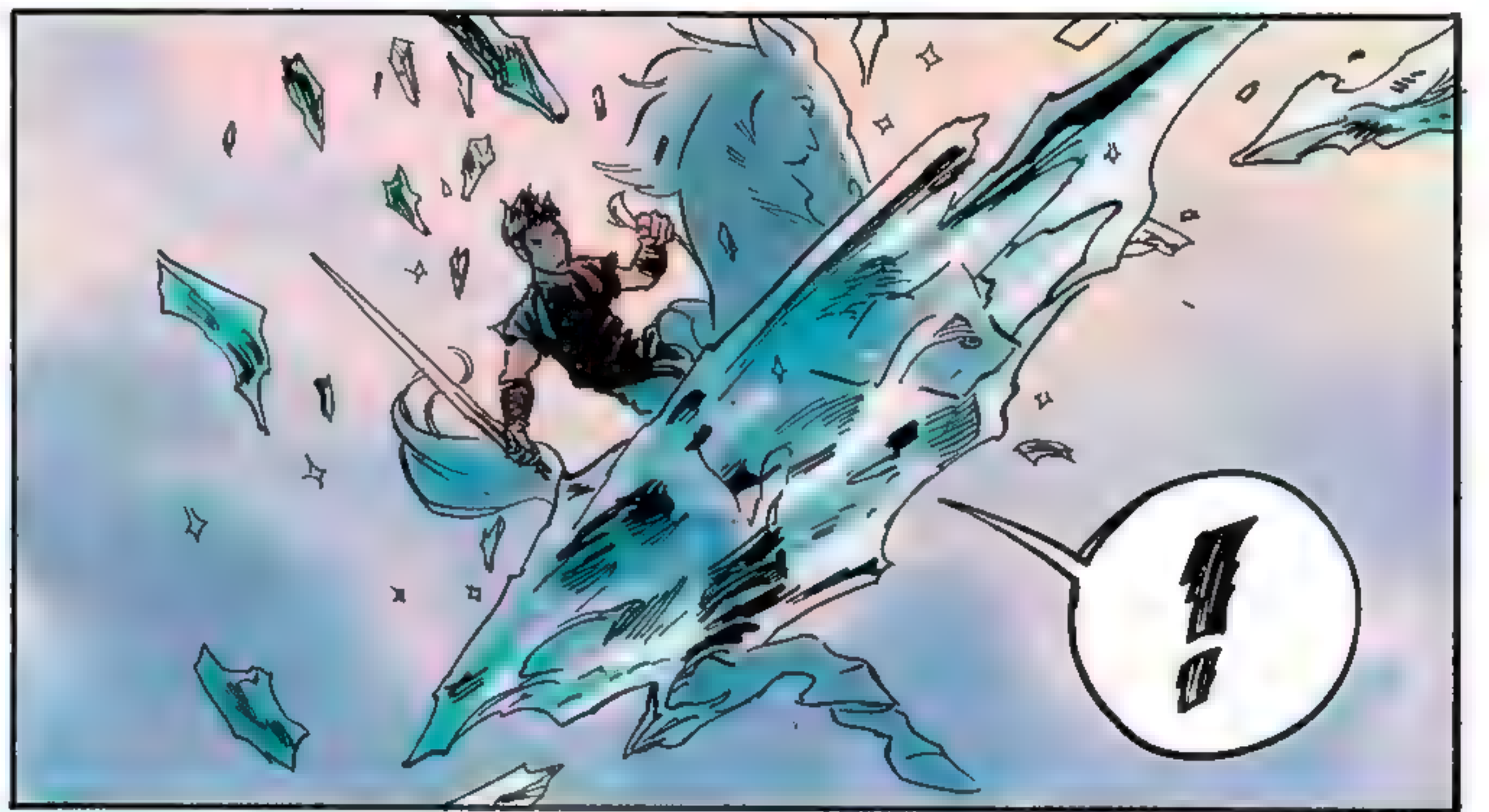
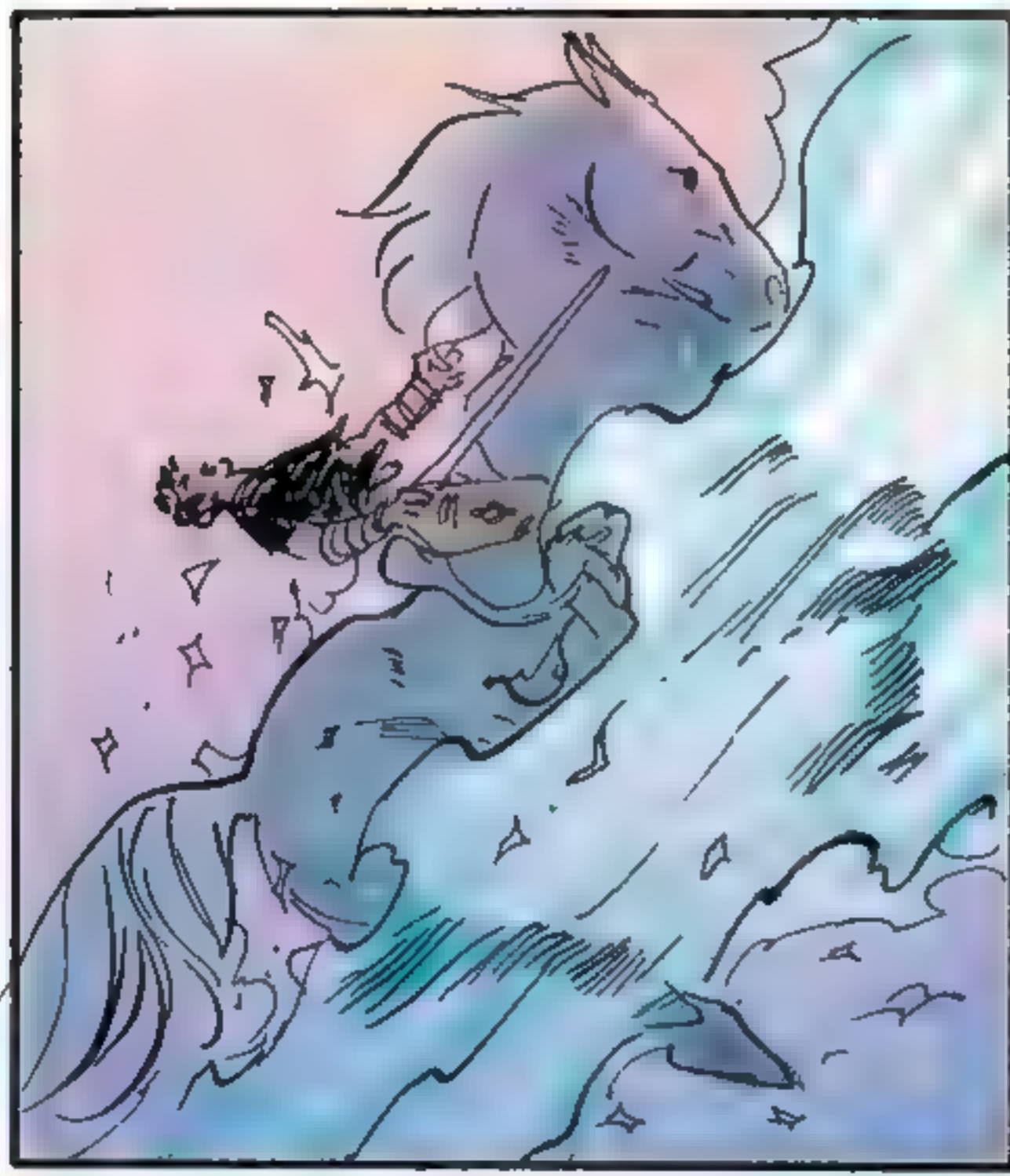
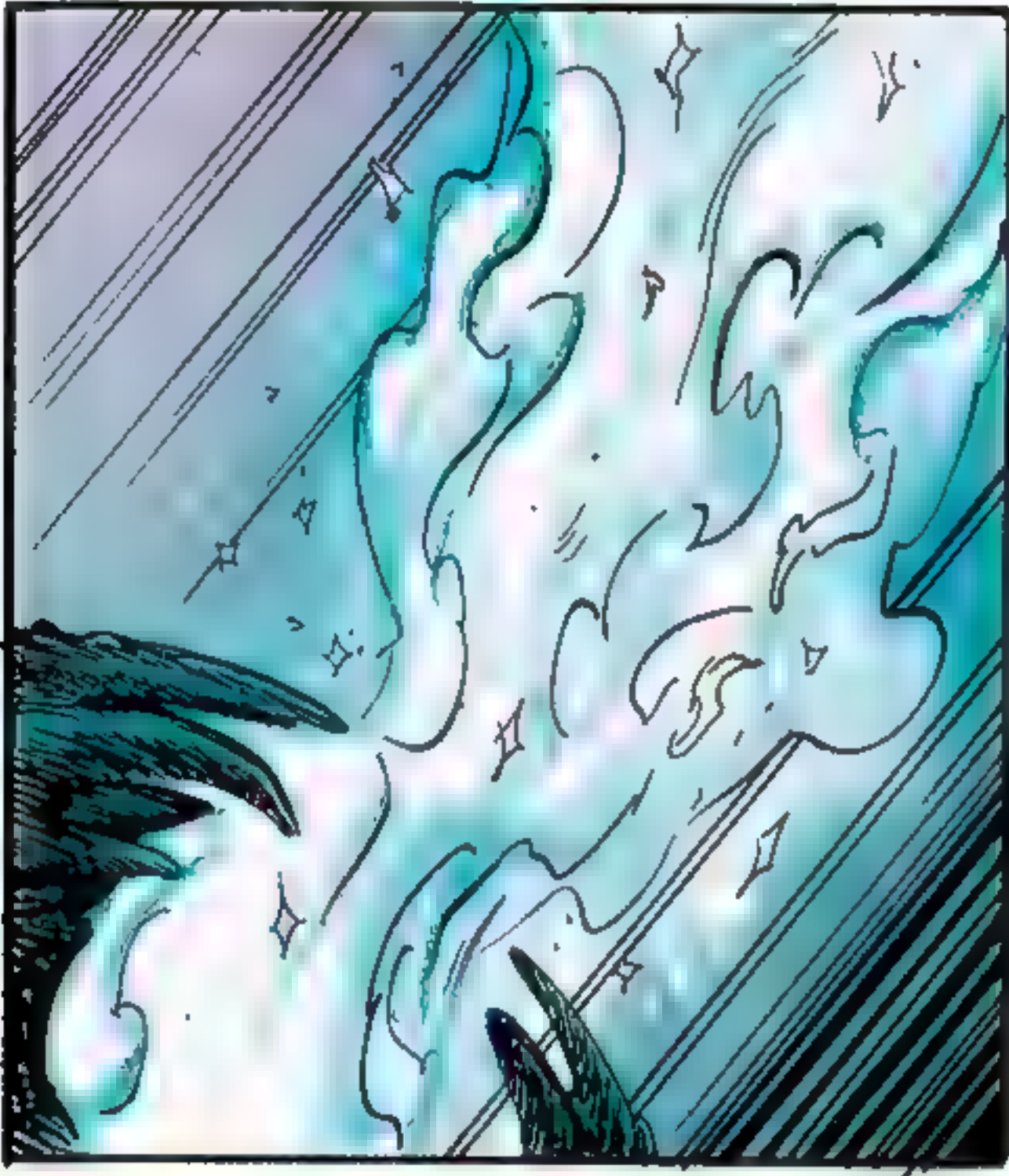
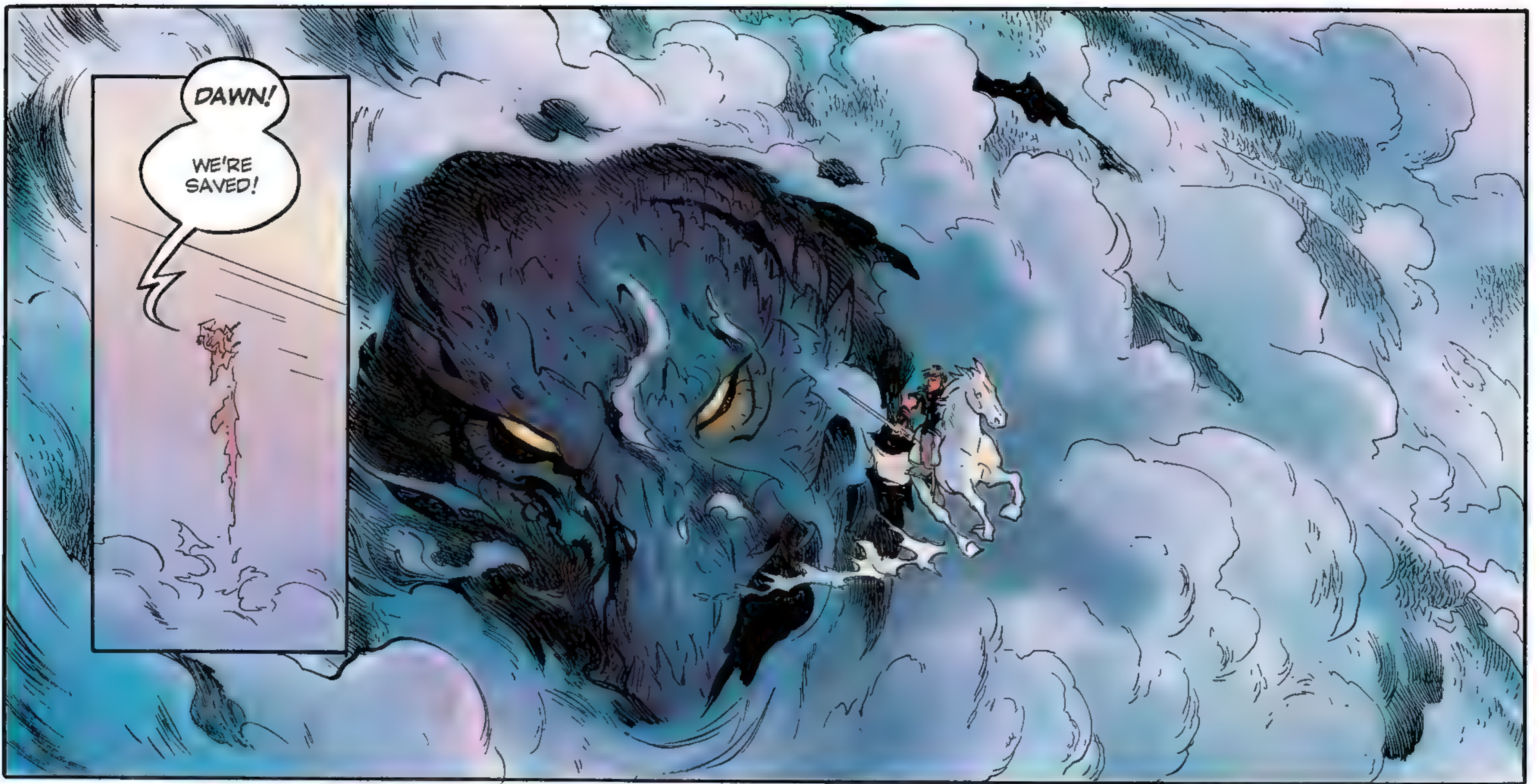


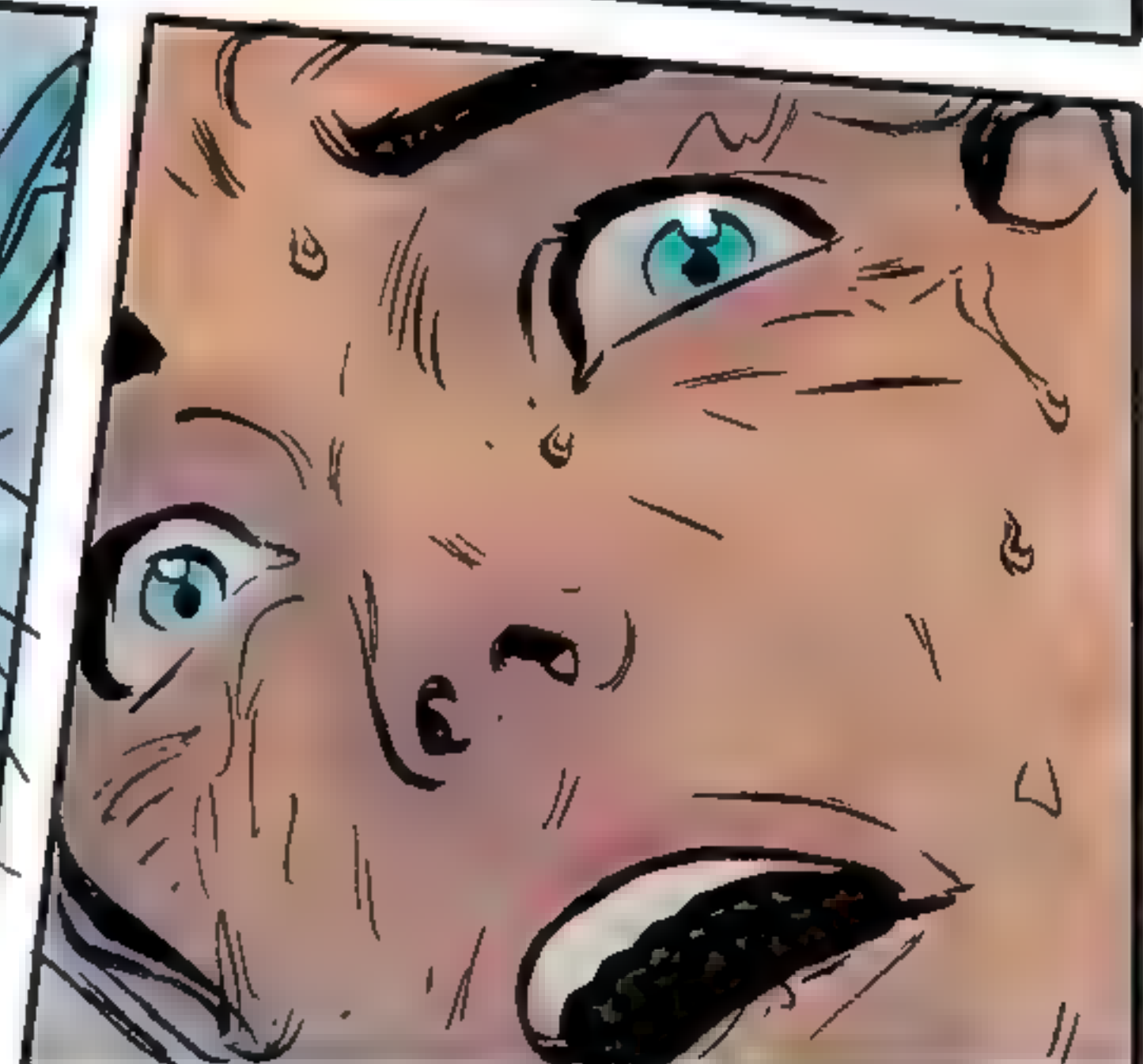
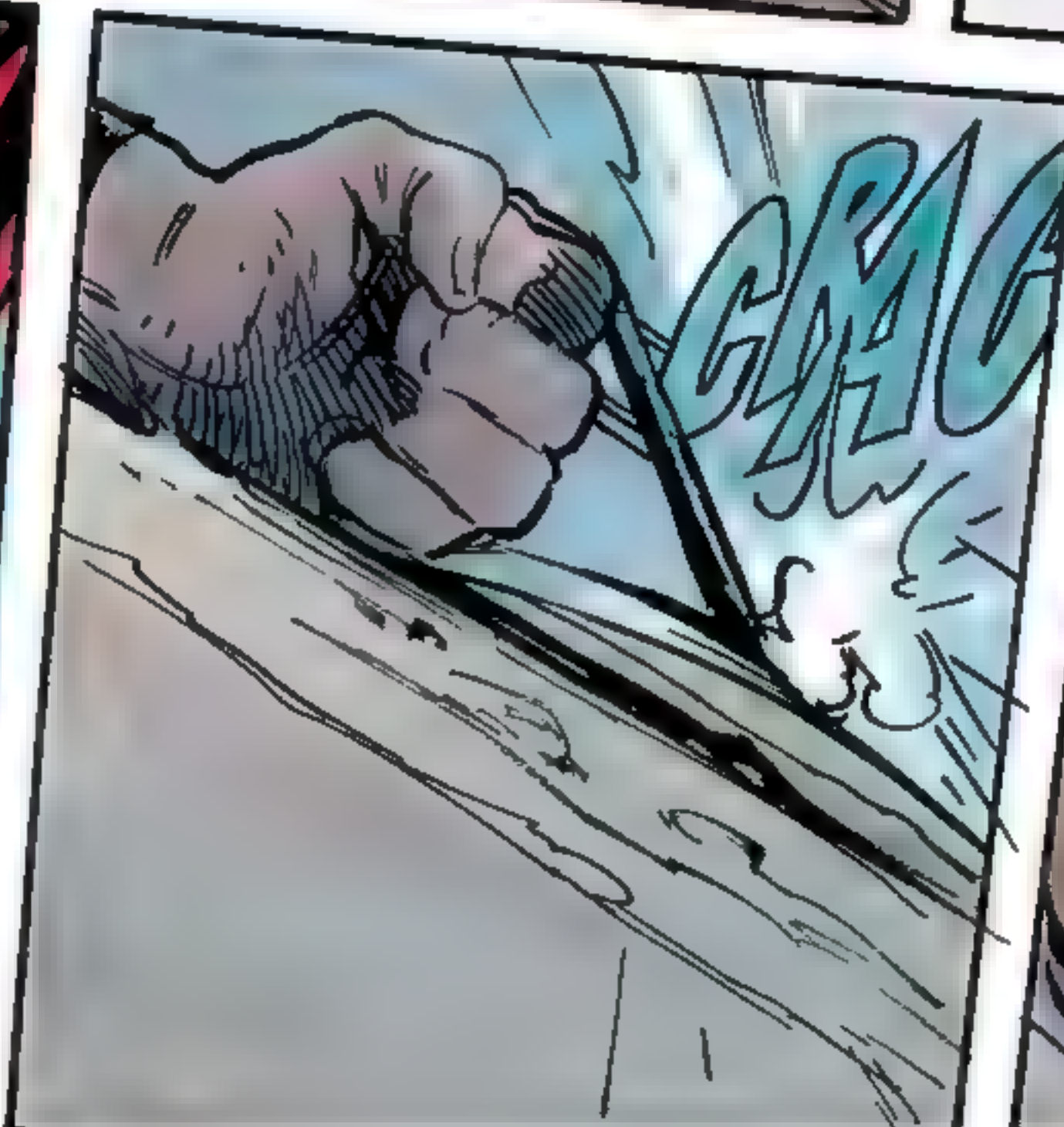
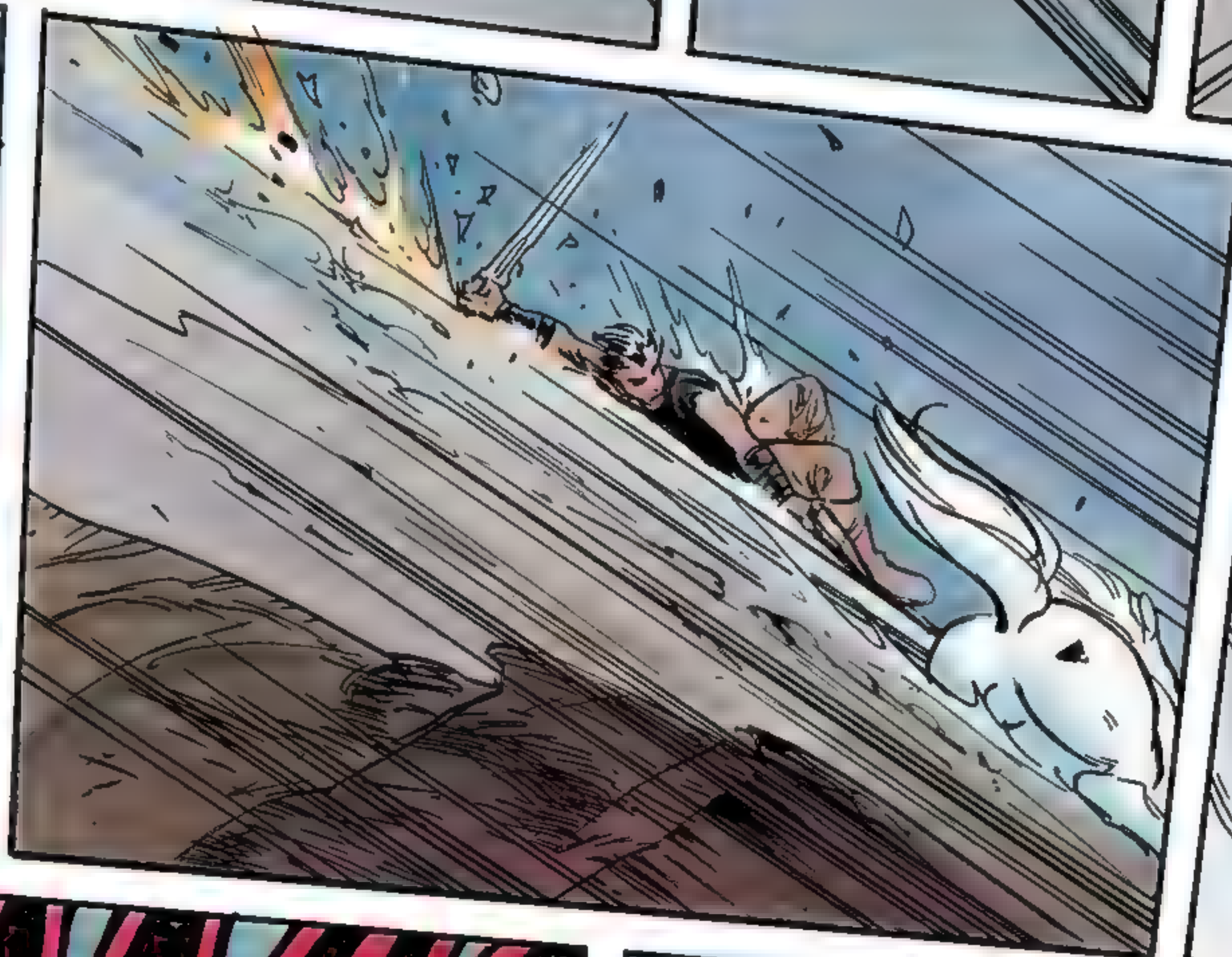
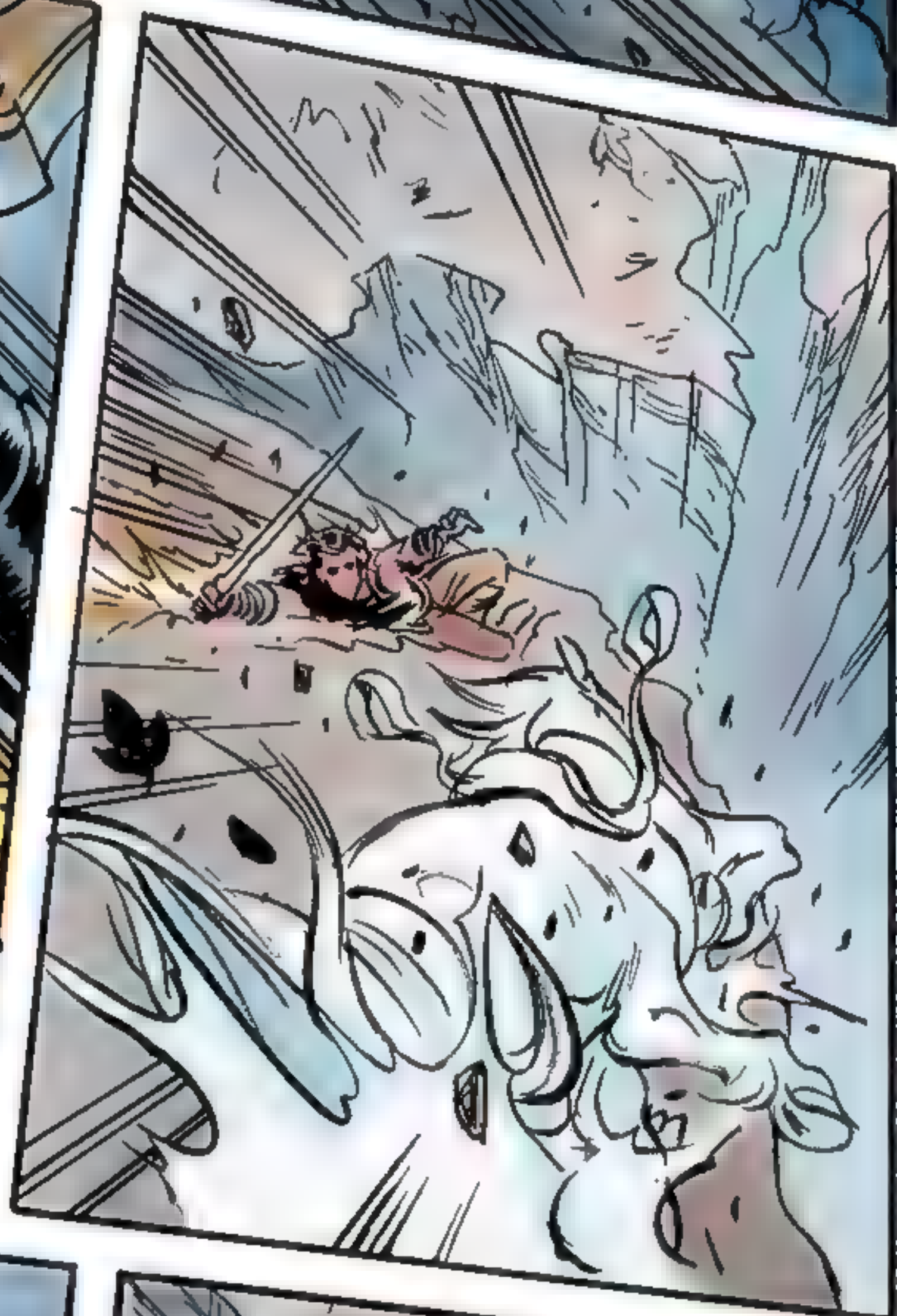
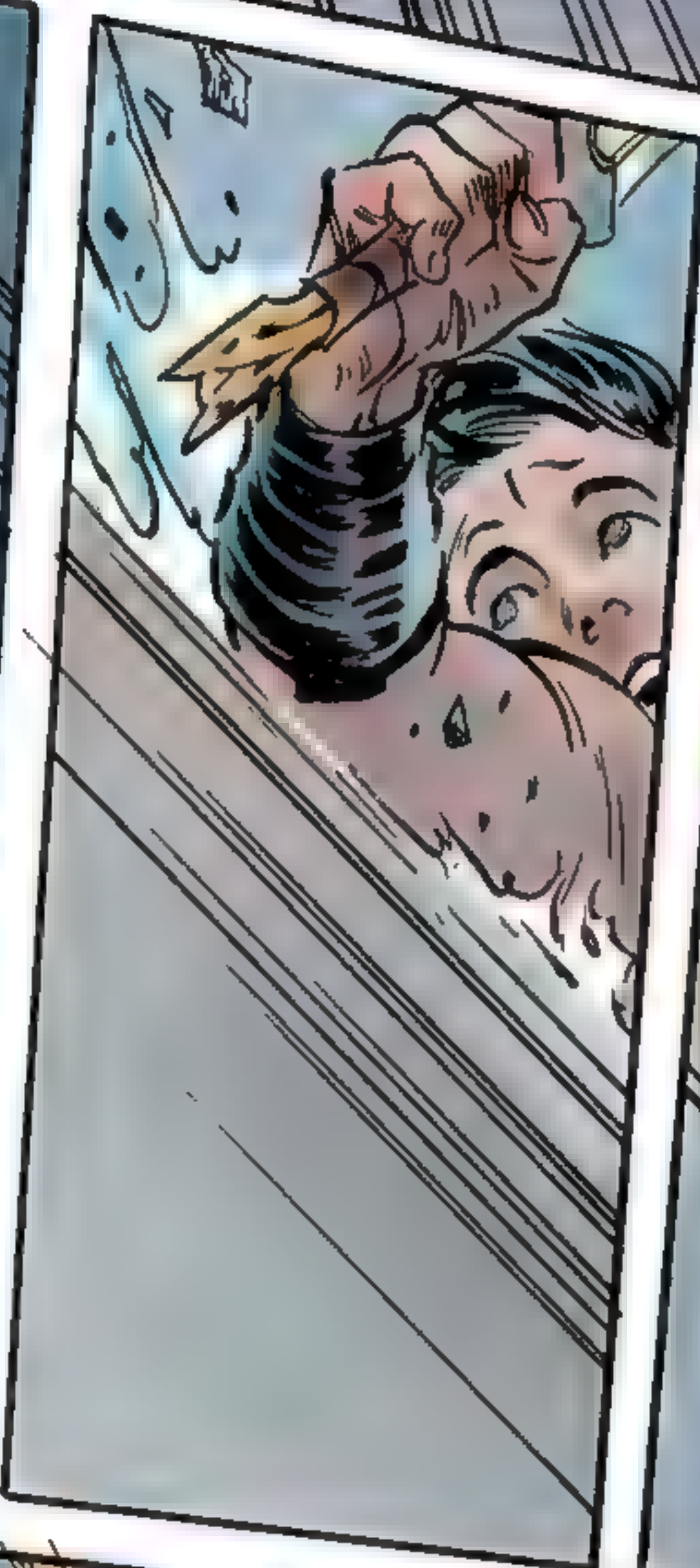
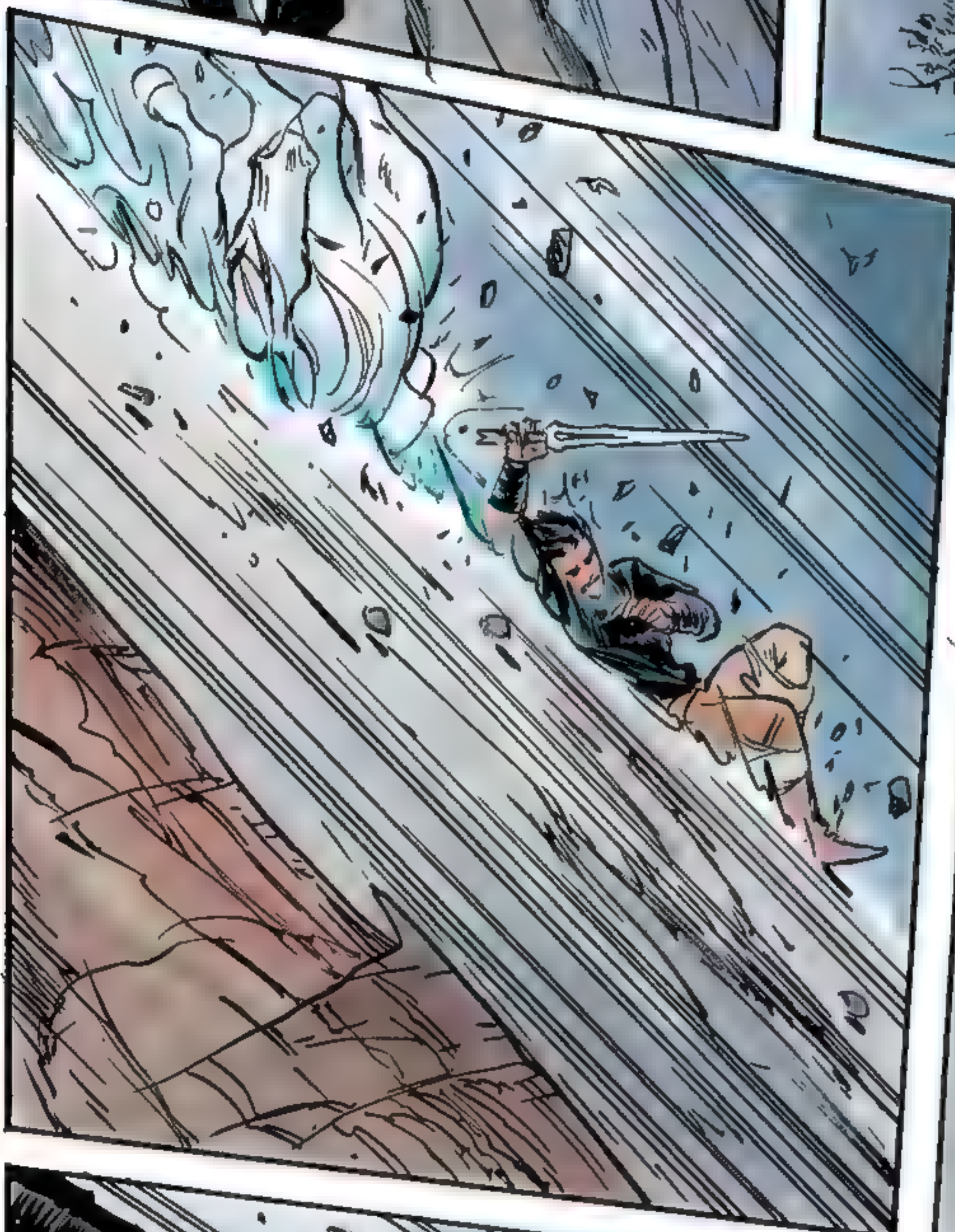
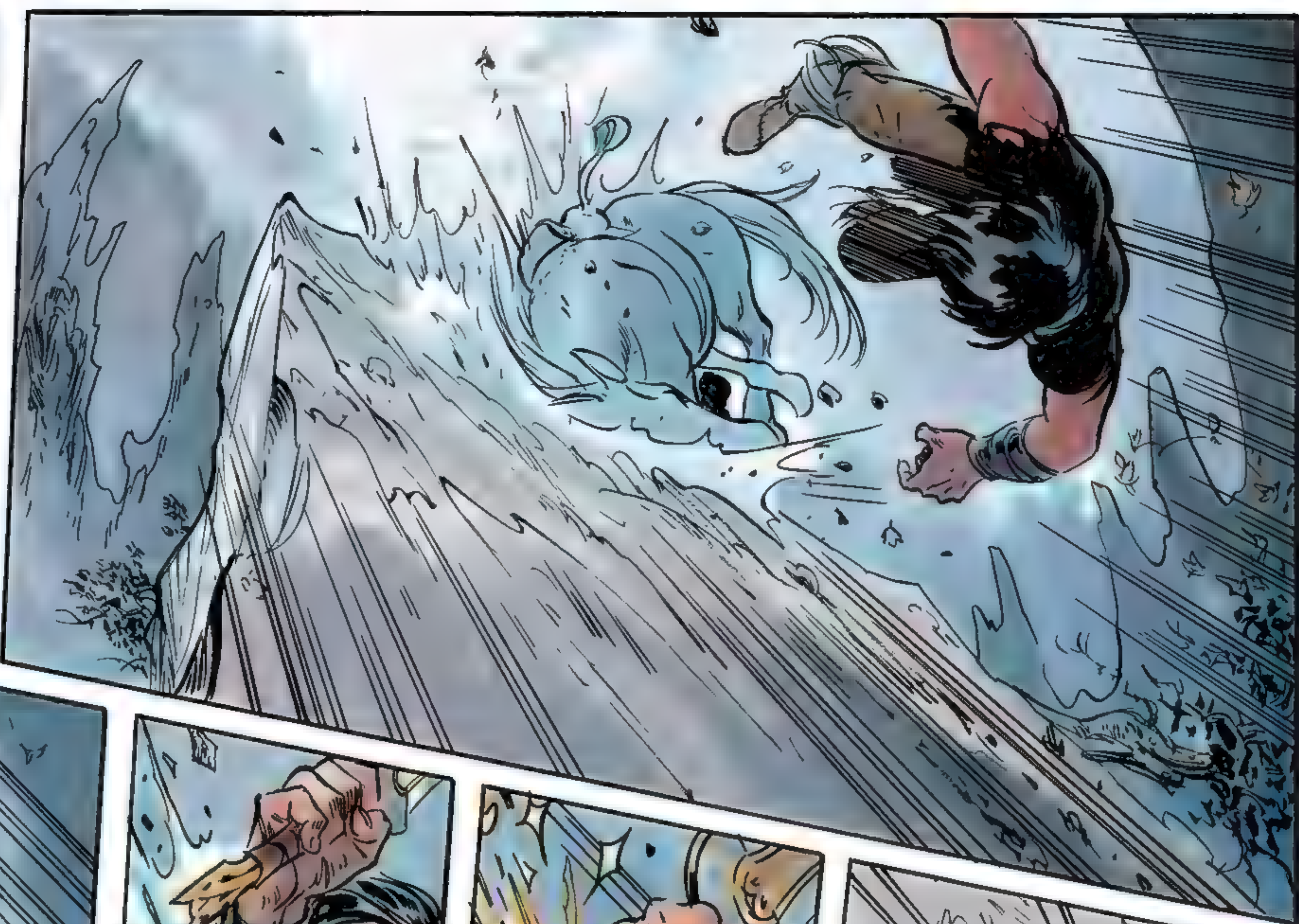


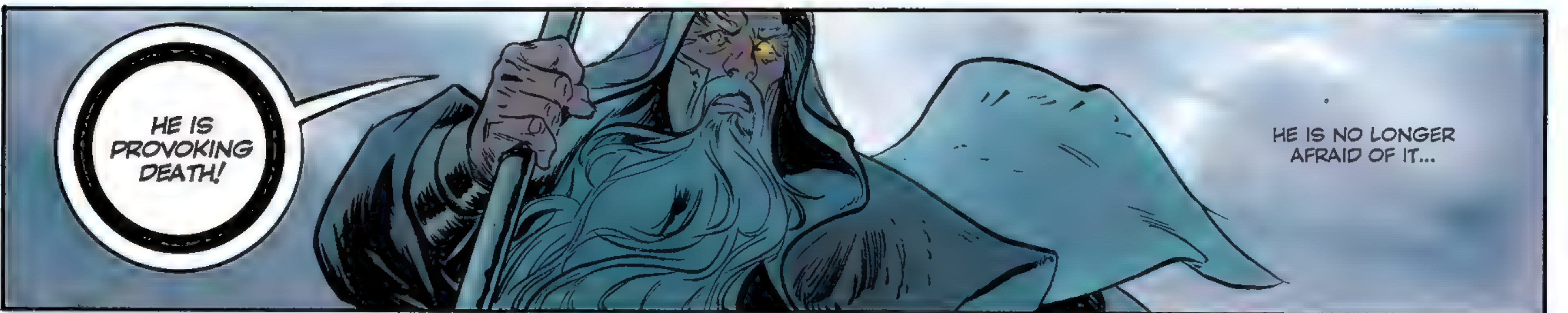
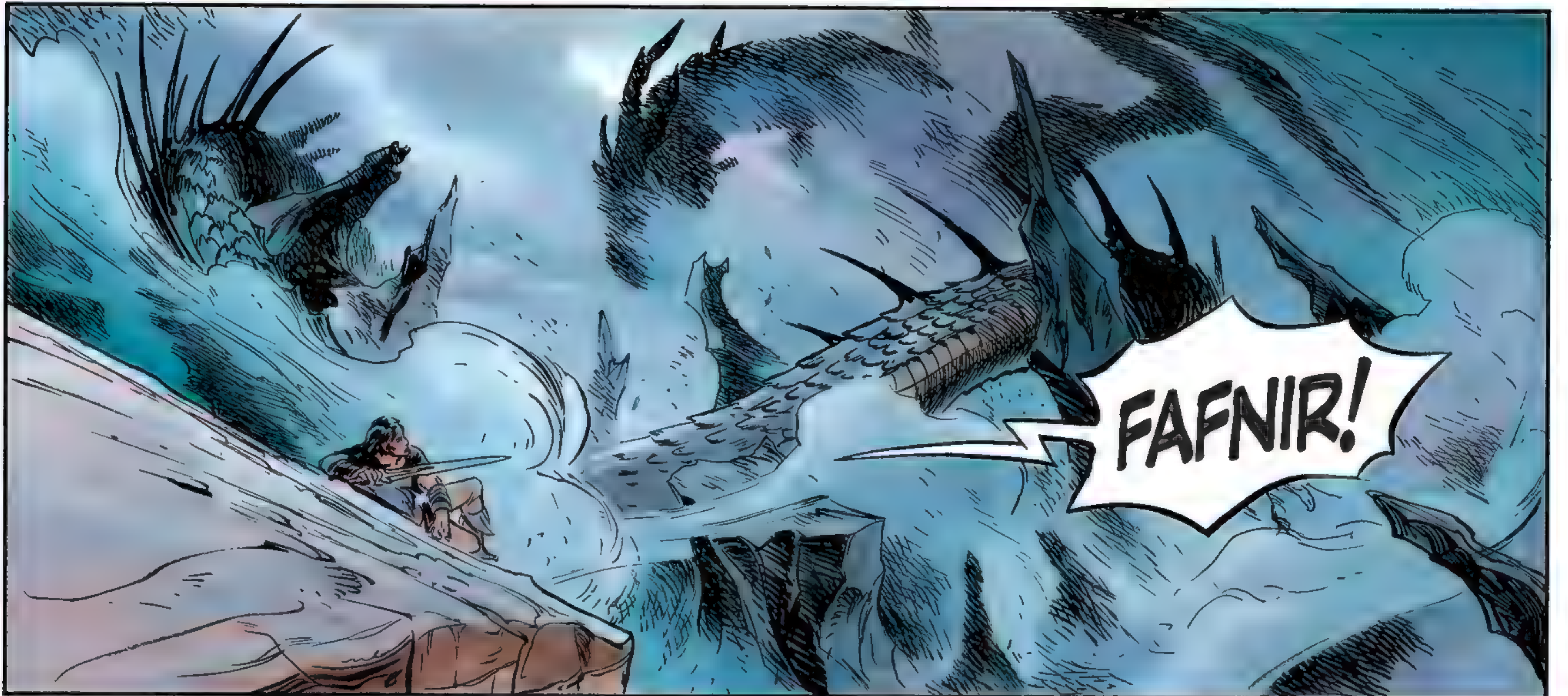
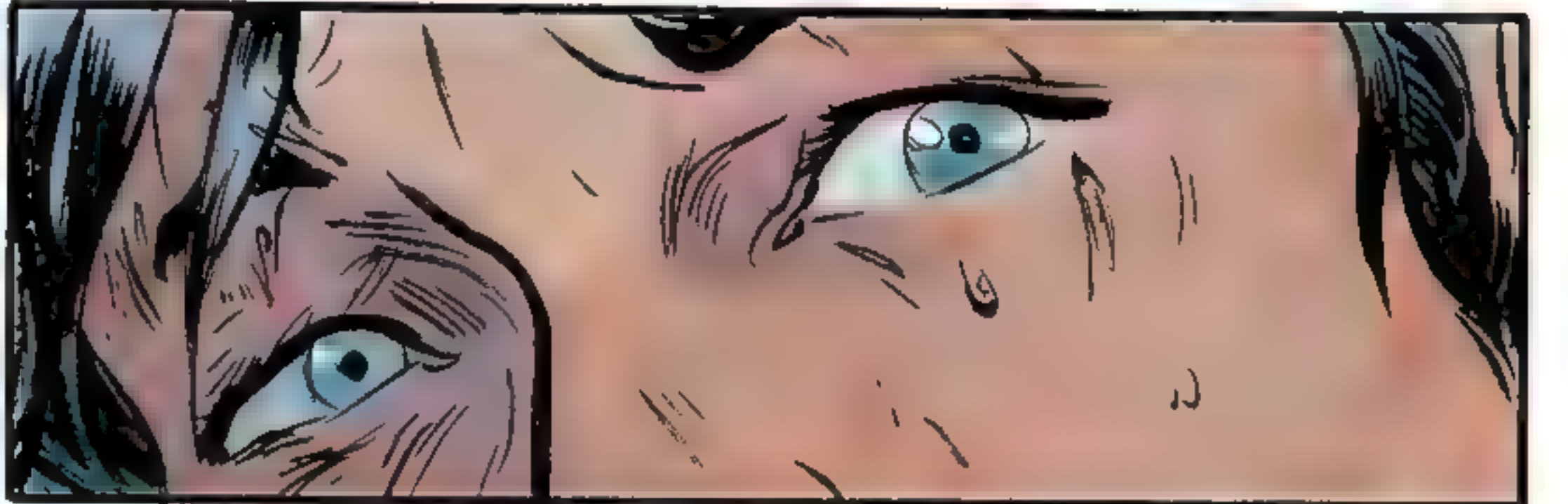
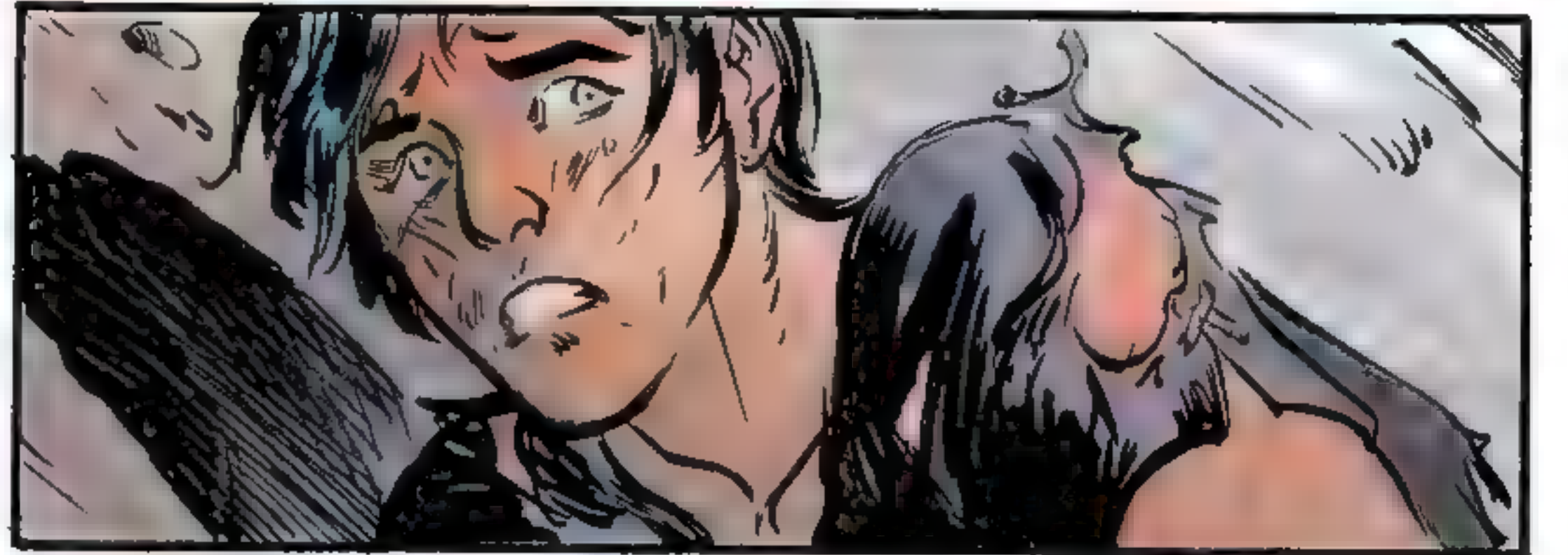
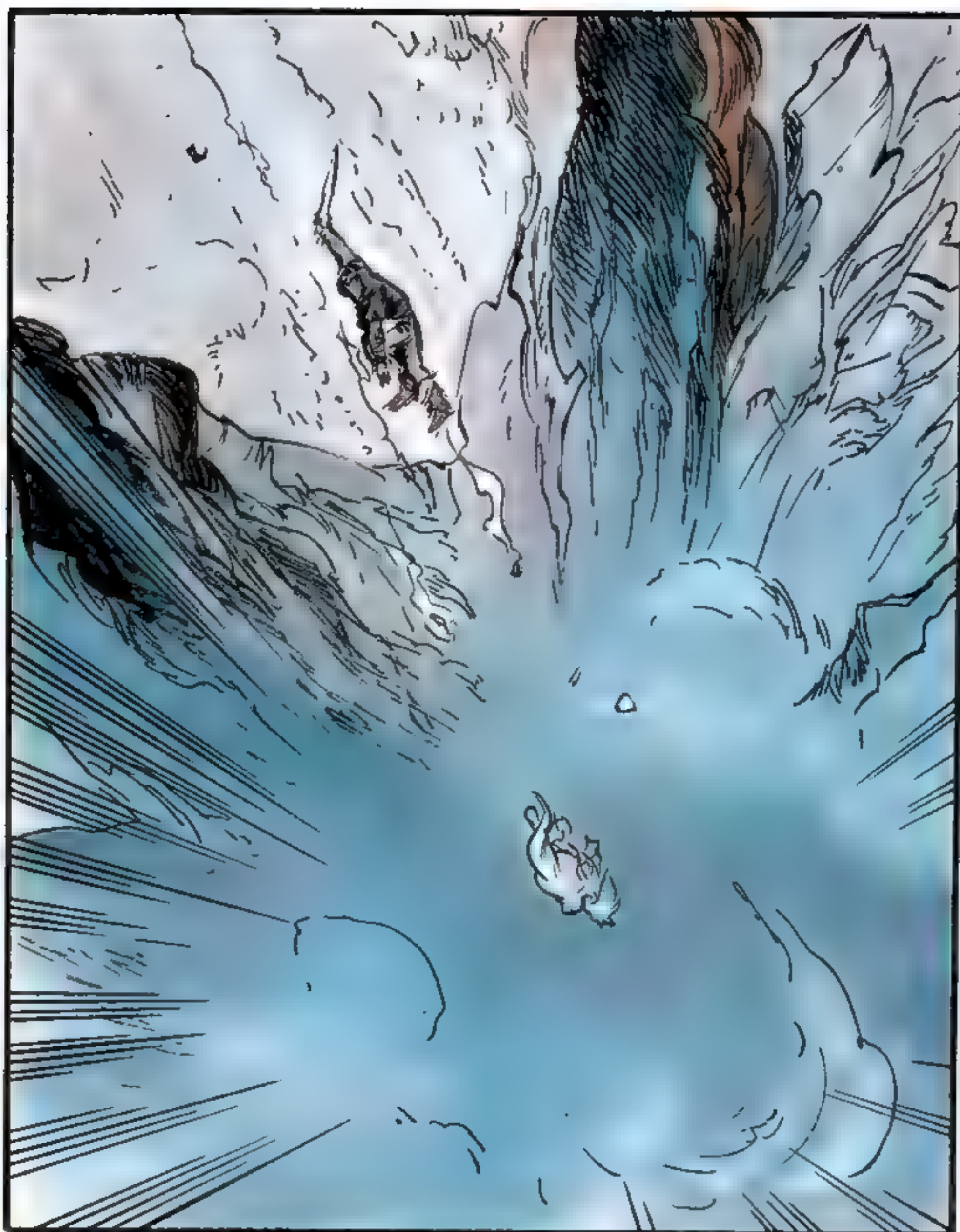




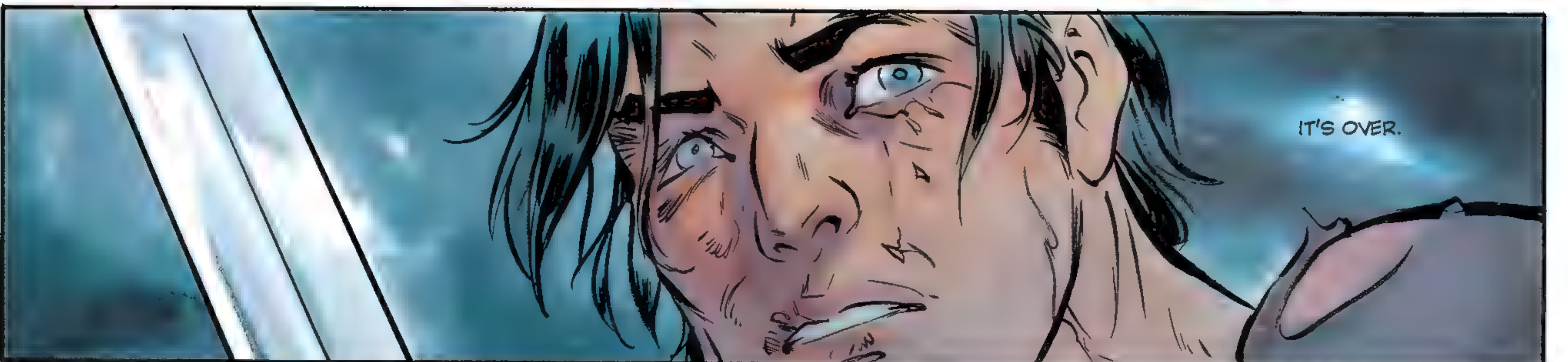


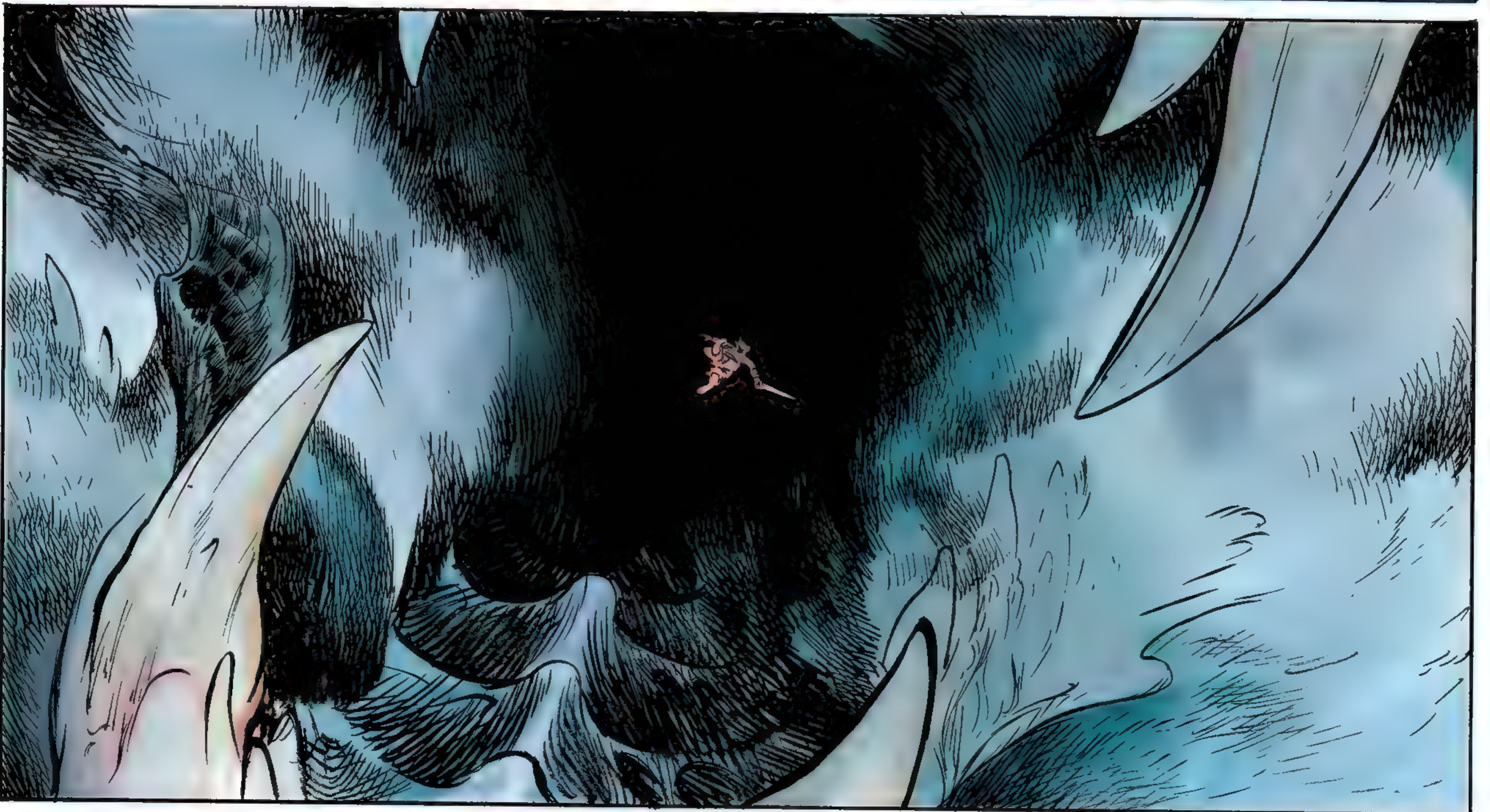
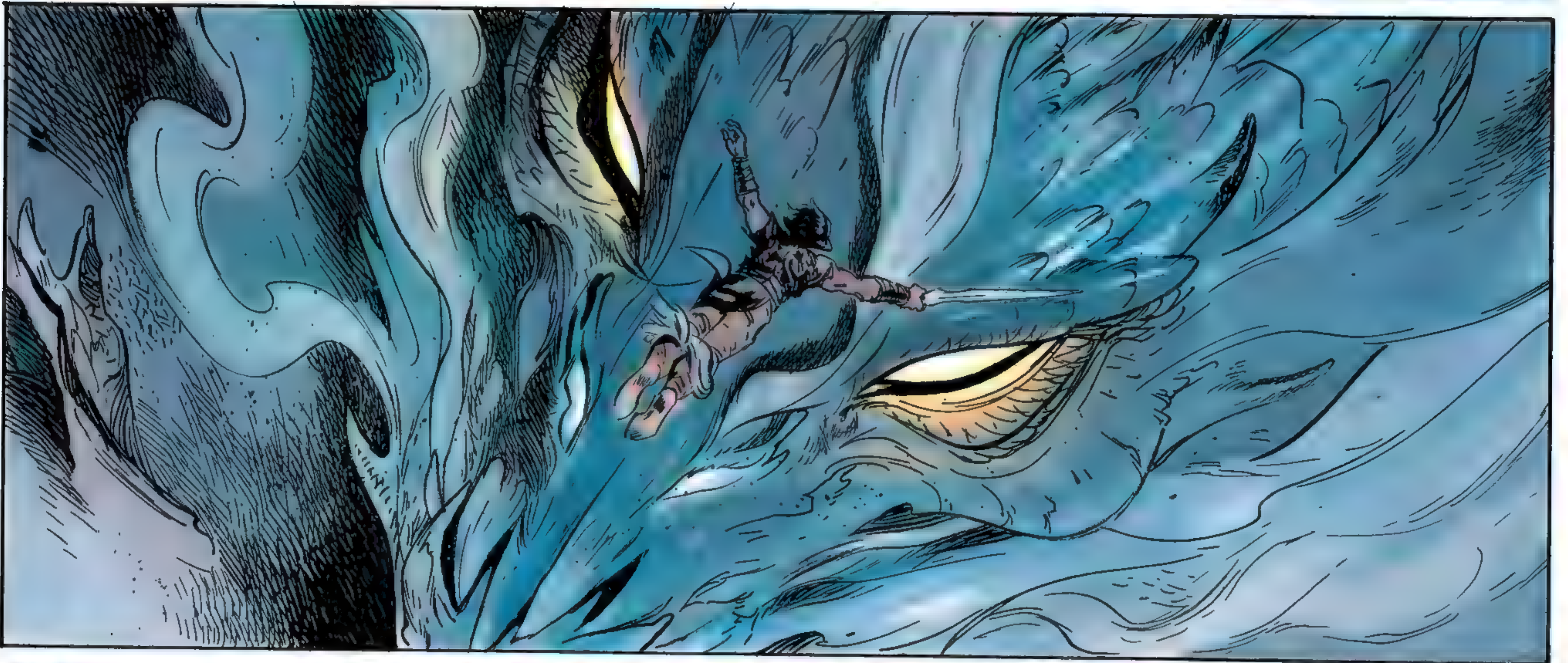







HE IS NO LONGER
AFRAID OF IT...











YOU HAVE
EARNED
YOUR
ANSWER...

IN THE WEST
THERE IS A RIVER
WITHOUT BANKS.
WHERE THE SUN SETS.
FOLLOW THE RIVER...
FIND THE OCEAN.
THERE YOU WILL
FIND THOSE THAT
RESEMBLE
YOU!

THE
LAND OF
MEN.

YOU HAVE
WHAT YOU
CAME FOR.

NOW...

...YOU
WOUNDED
ME BUT YOU DID
NOT KILL ME.
IF YOU LEAVE NOW,
IF YOU ABANDON
YOUR WEAPON IN
MY HEART, YOU
WILL FIND YOUR
PEOPLE...

...AND
I WILL
LIVE.

AND NOW
YOU WANT
MY PITY?!

ON THE
CONTRARY!

SOON YOU WILL
WANT THE POWER
OF THE GOLD. BUT IT
IS NOT ENOUGH TO
CARRY IT. OH NO...
FOR HIM, YOU MUST
DENY LOVE...

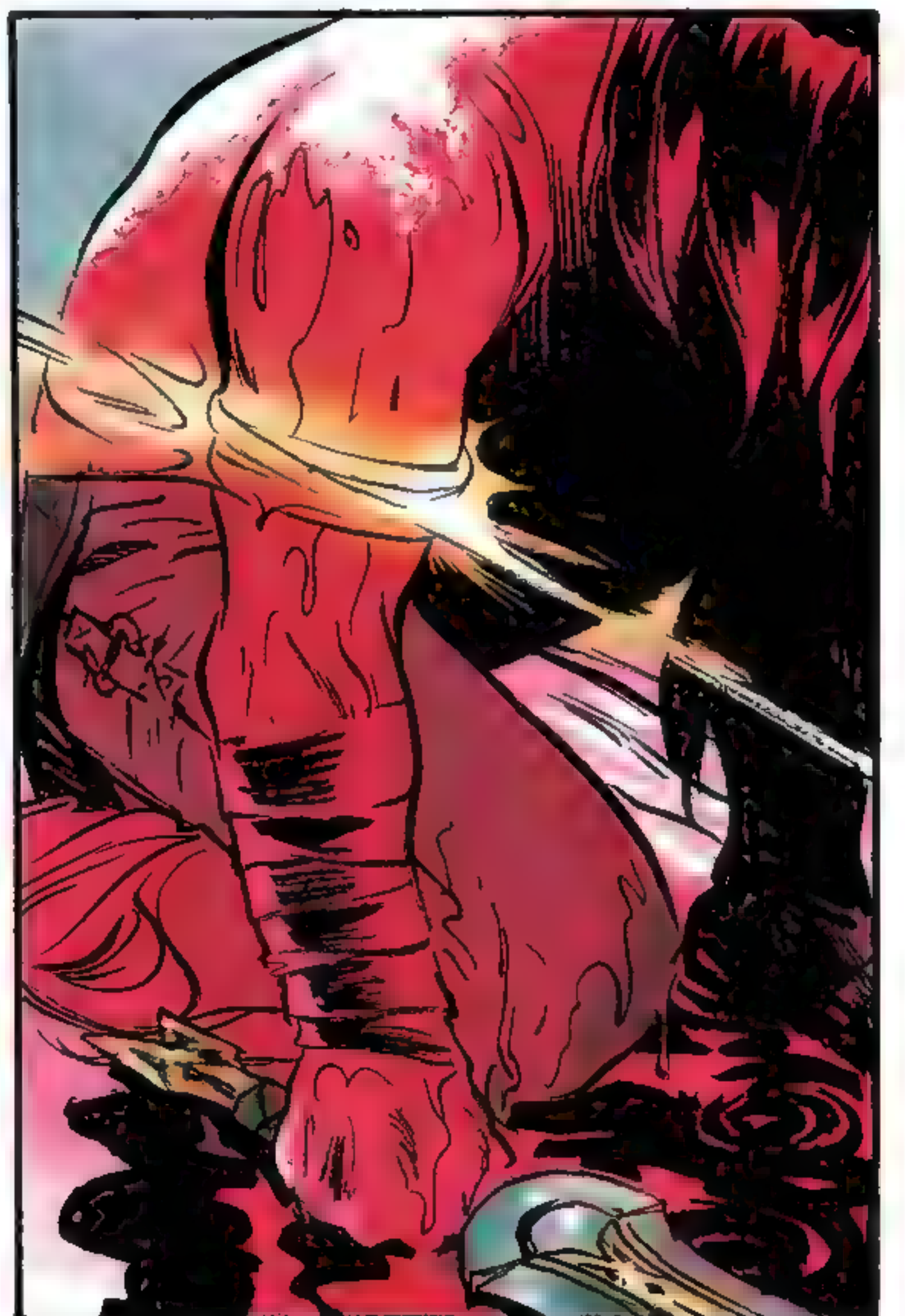
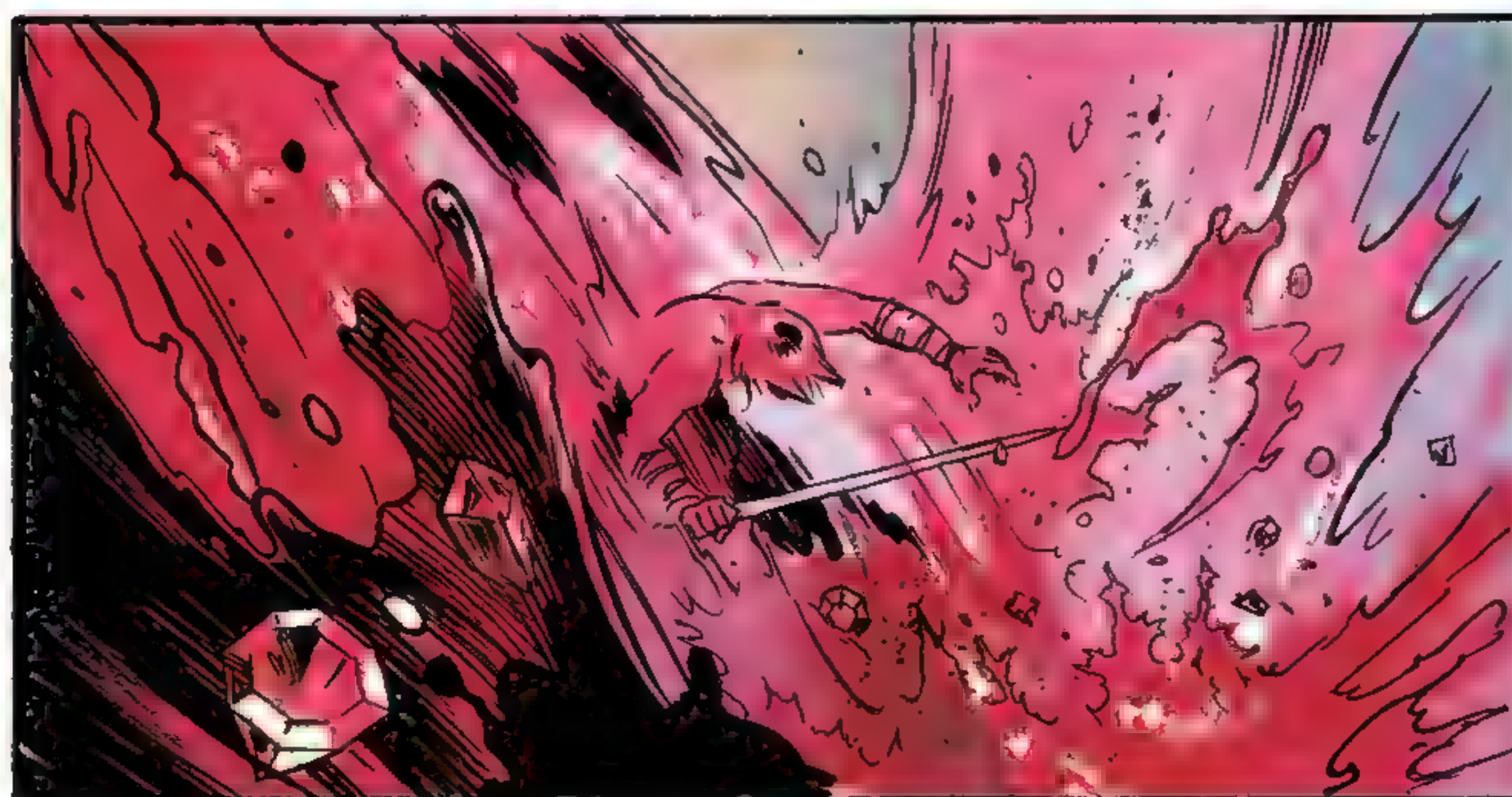
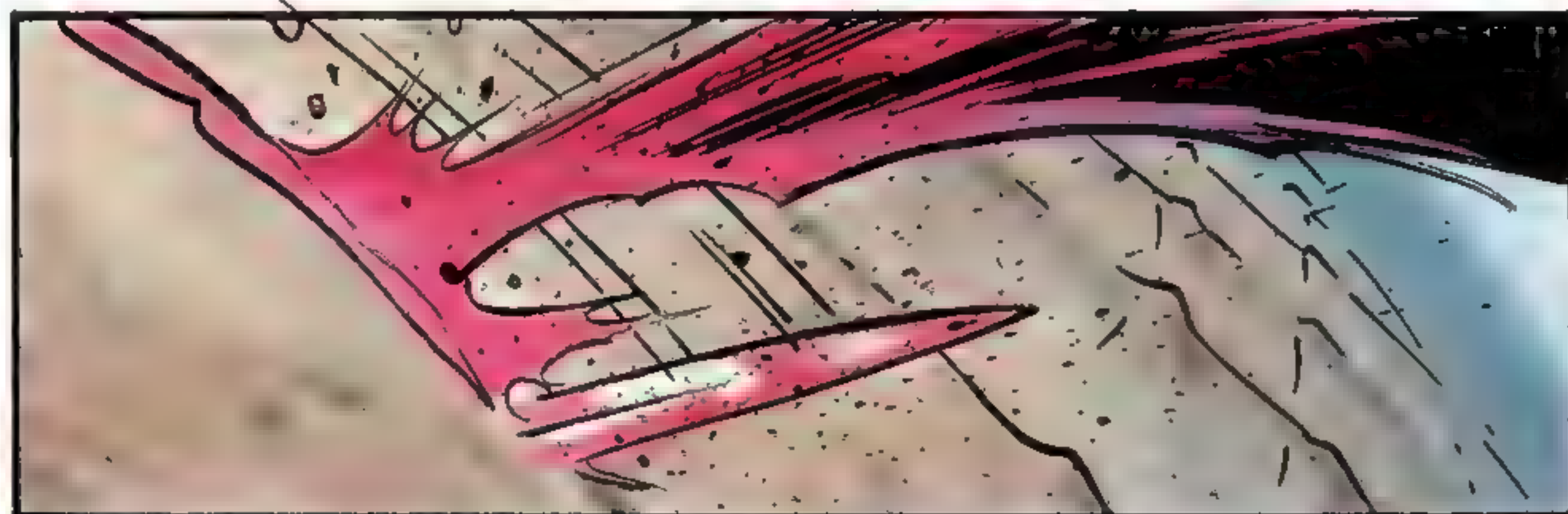
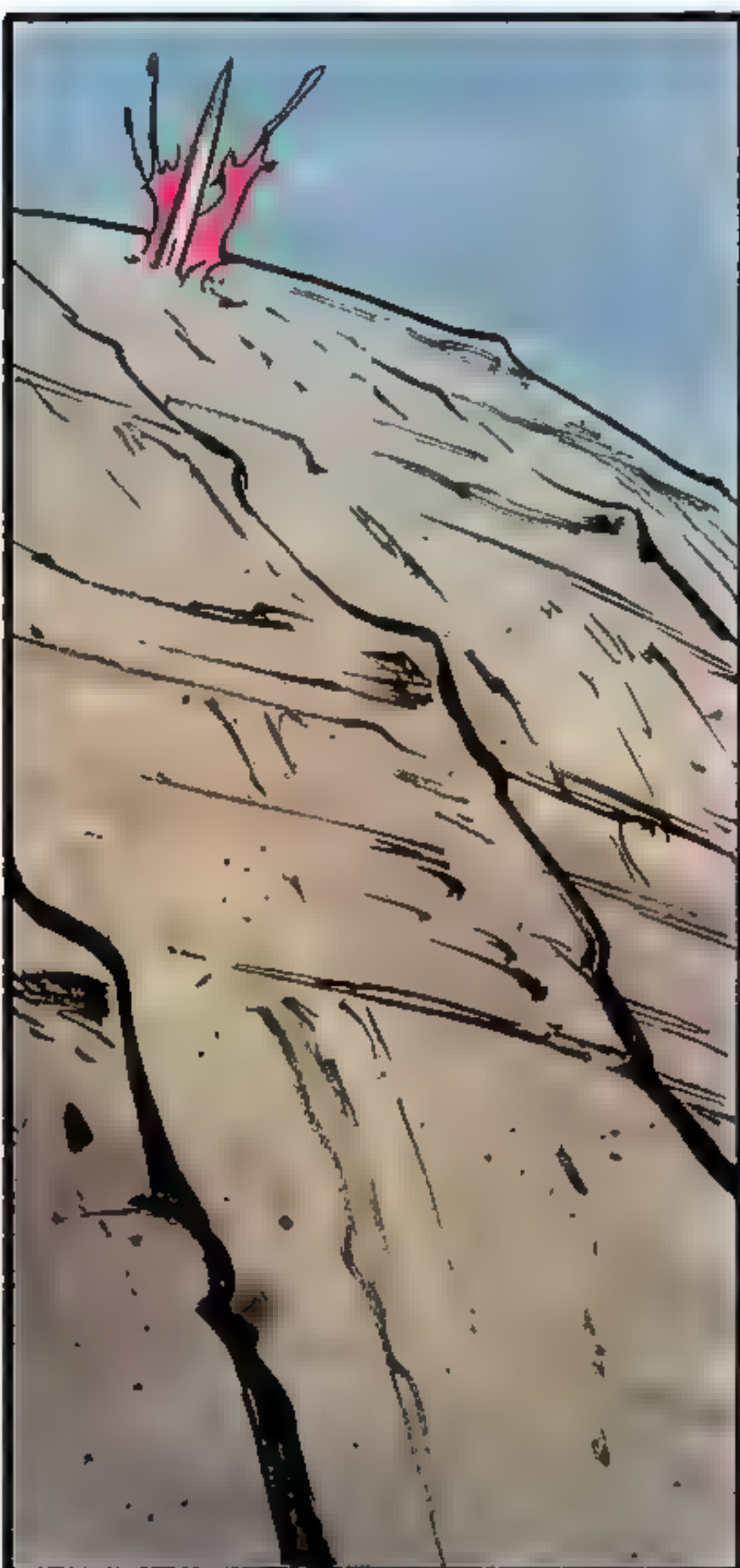
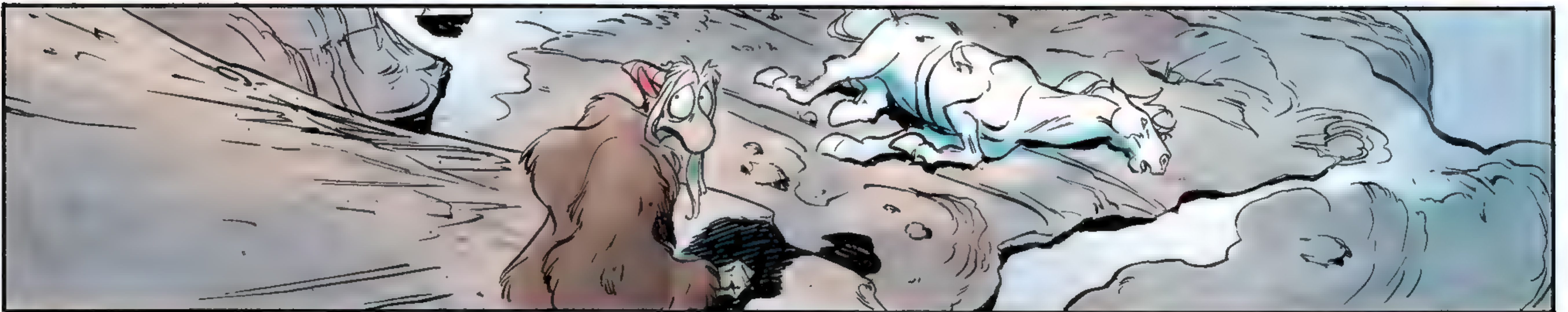
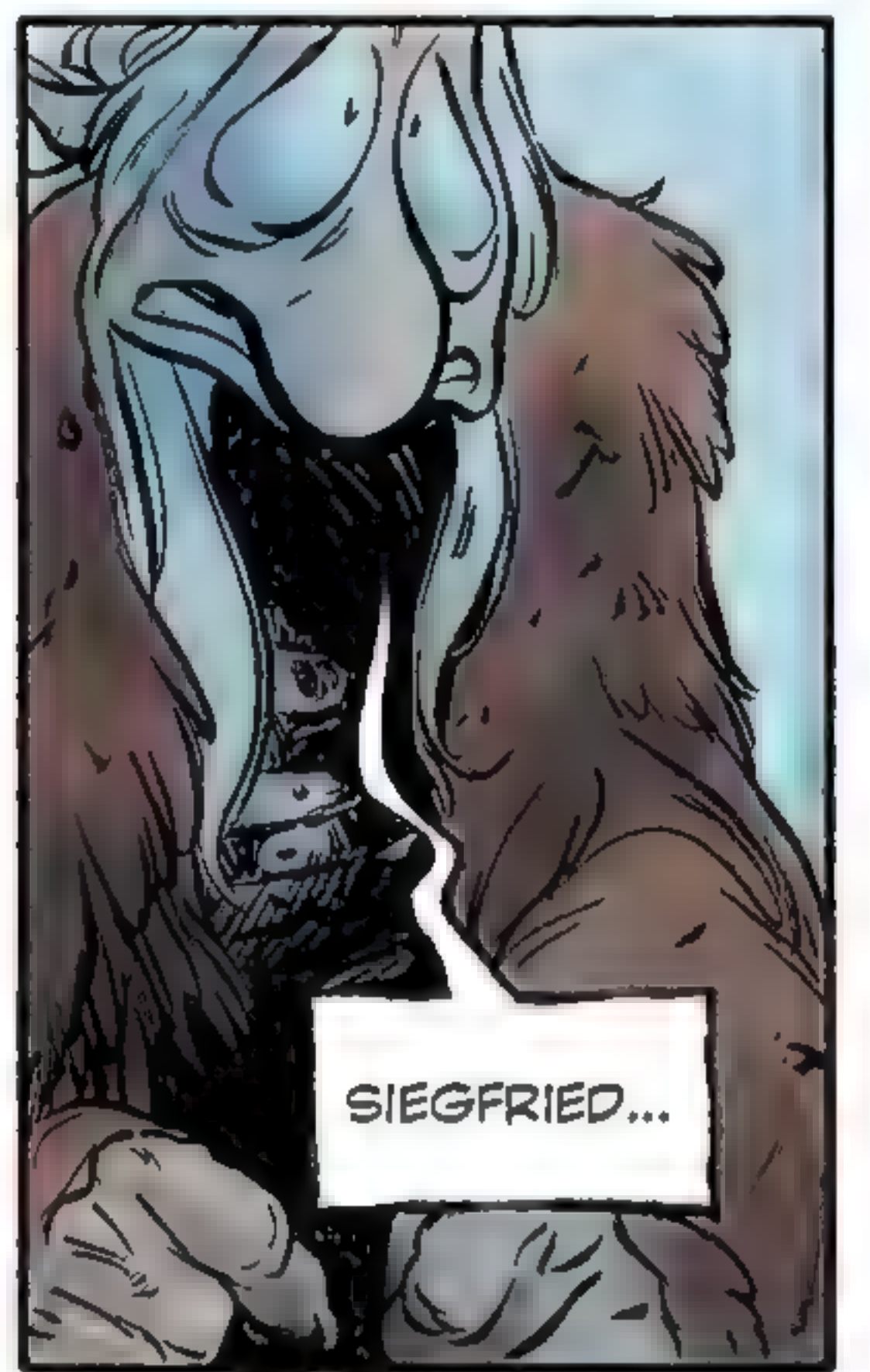
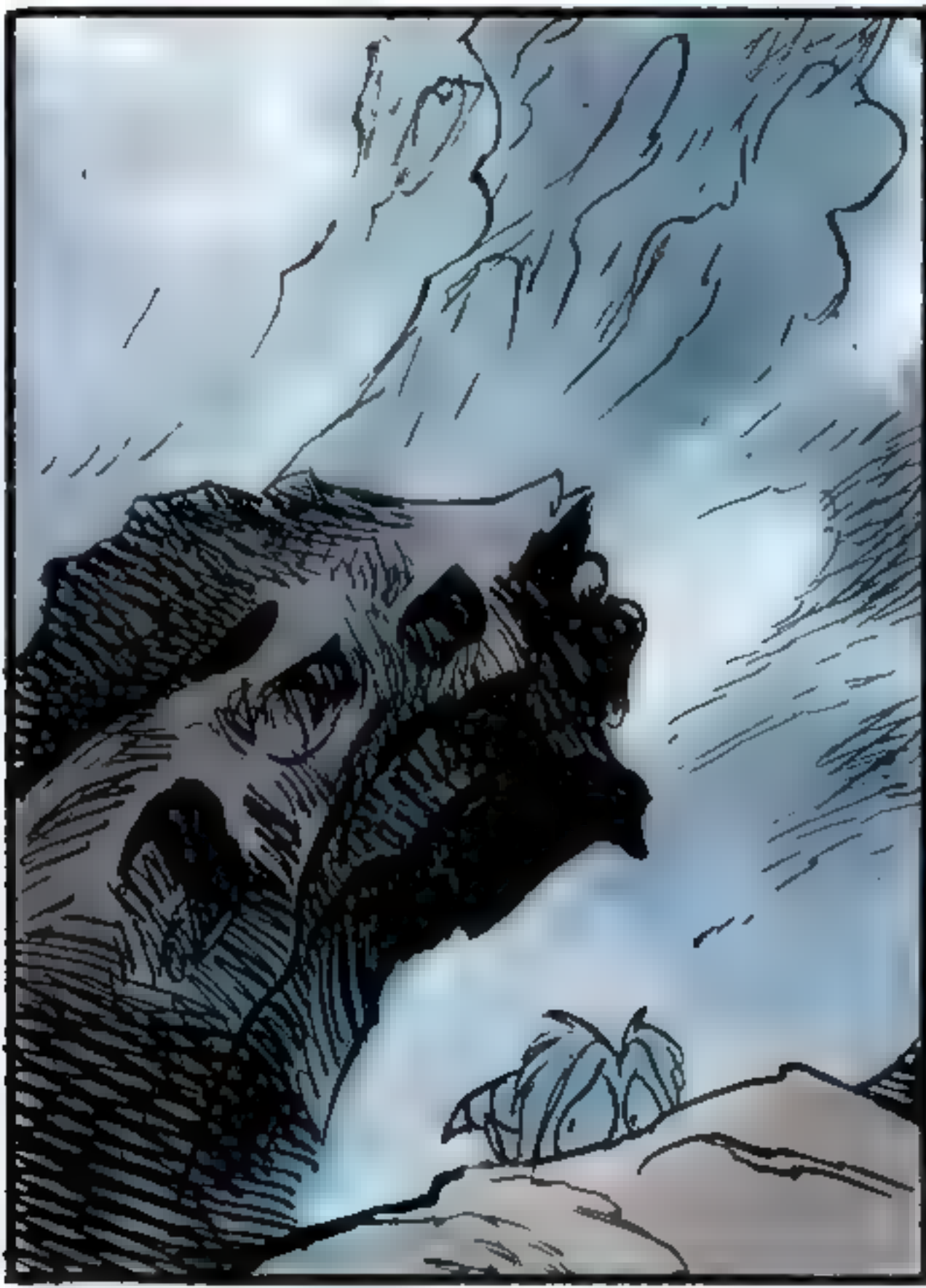
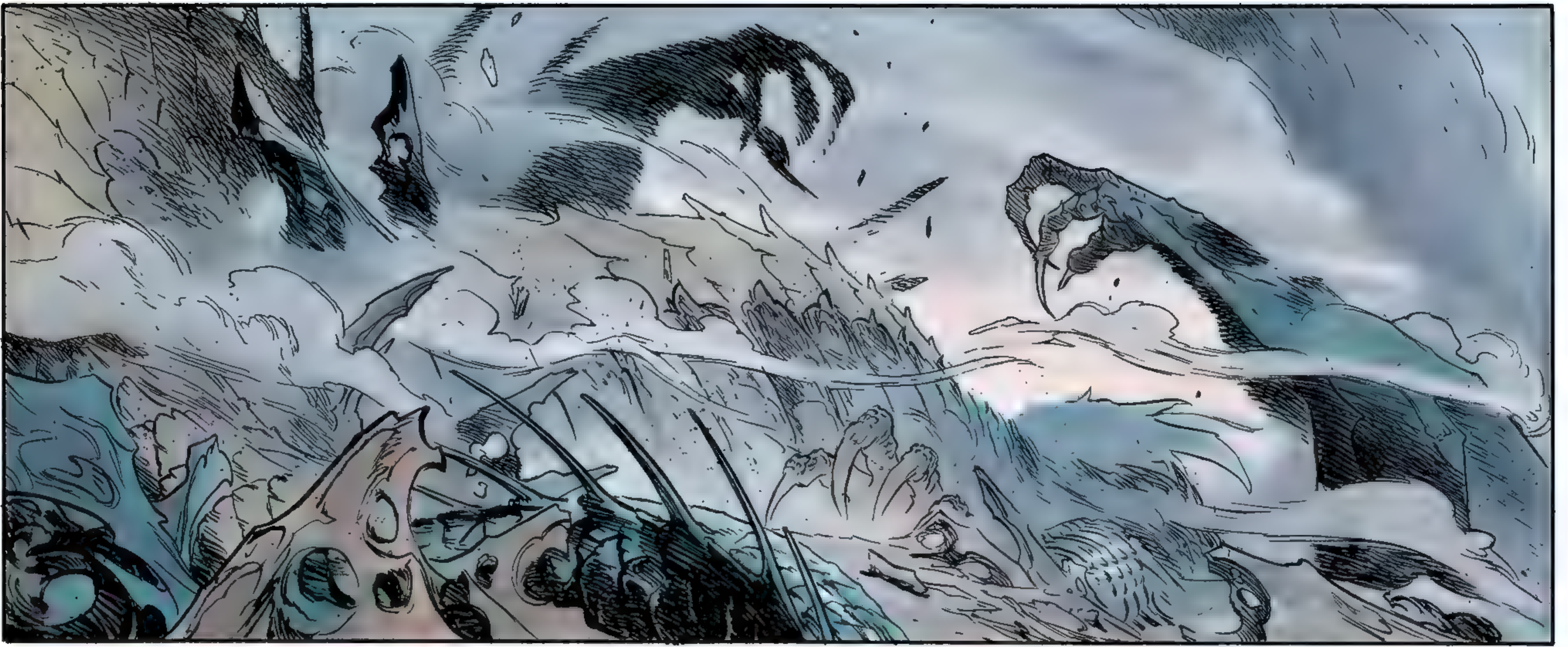
...YOURS SHALL BE YOUR
FIRST VICTIMS. THEN THE
POWERFUL WILL FALL.
BY THE GOLD! FOR GOLD!
YOU WILL CARRY IT UNTIL IT
EATS YOU INSIDE OUT LIKE
A WORM IN AN APPLE...
AND YOU WILL
BE KING...

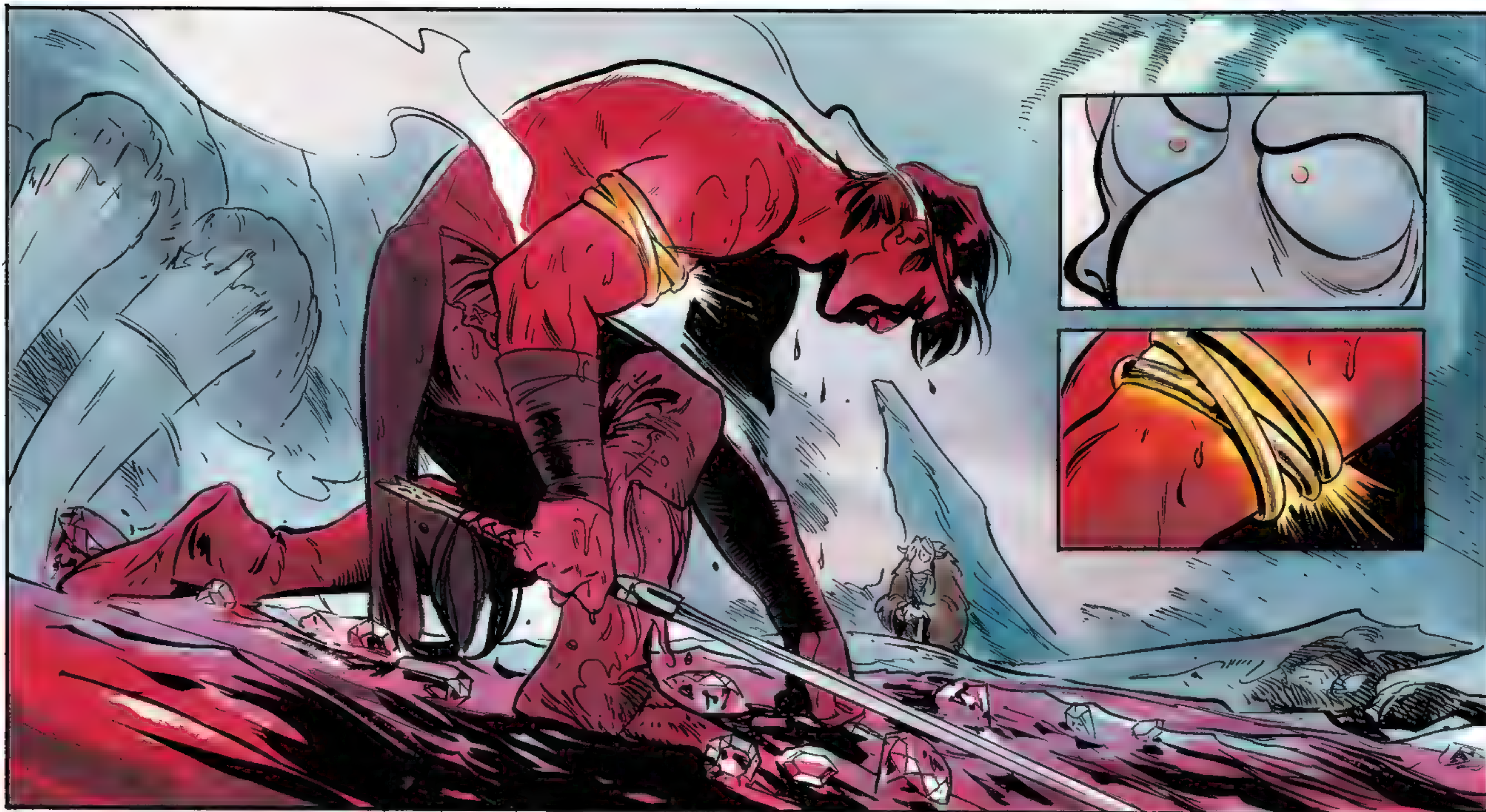
PULL OUT
YOUR SWORD!
TEAR MY HEART,
AND YOU WILL
TASTE THE MAGIC
OF MY BLOOD...
ONLY A SMALL
TASTE...

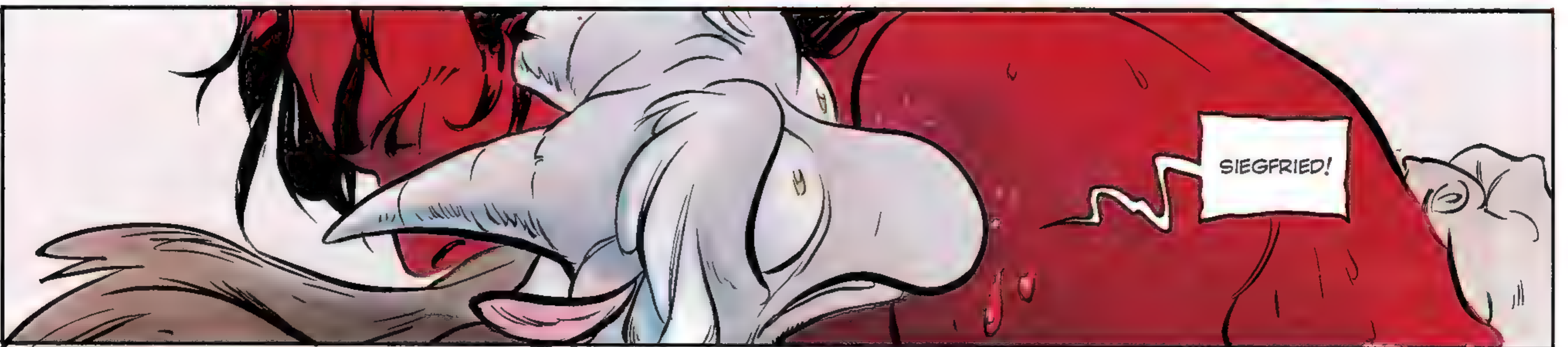
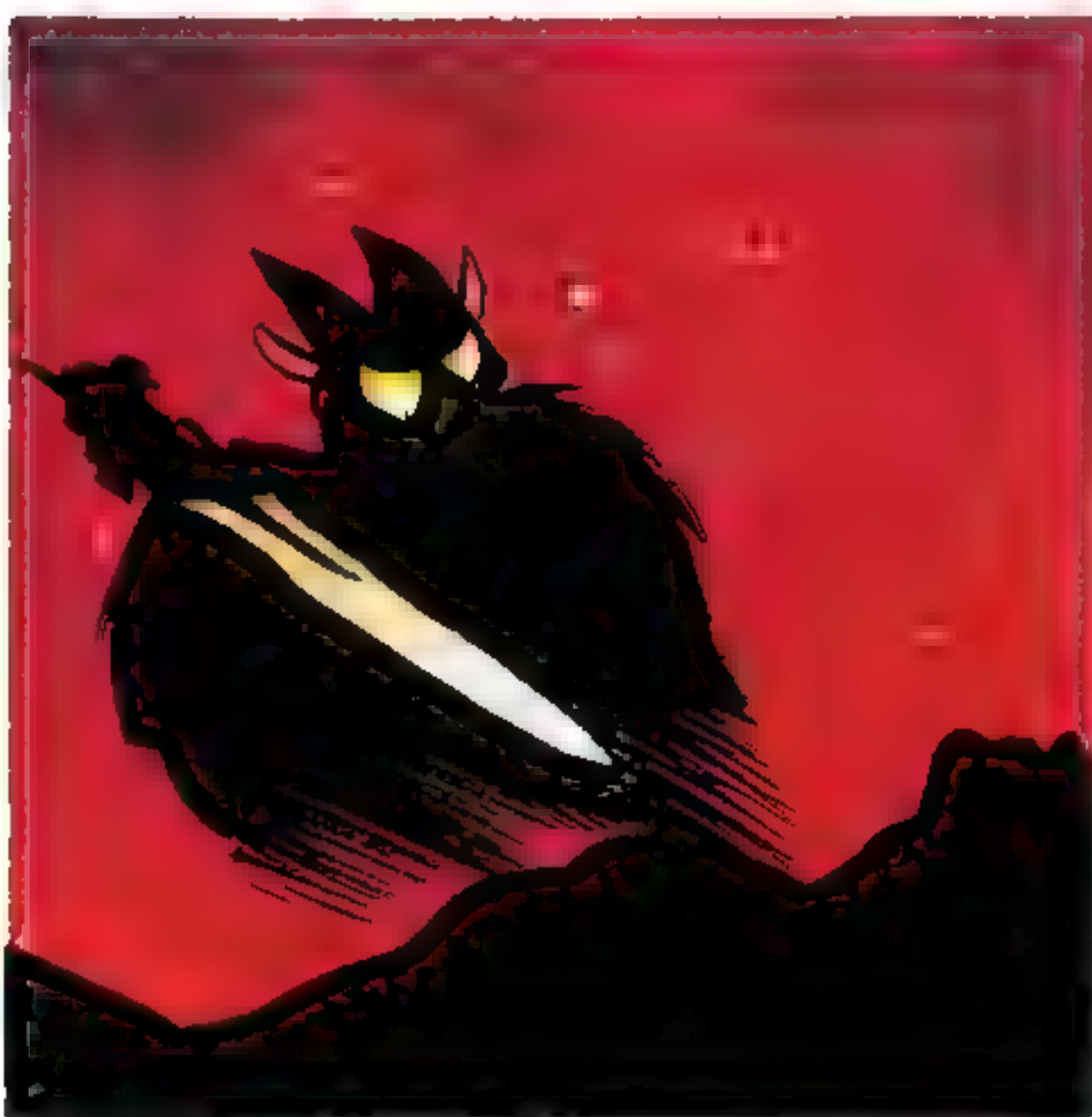
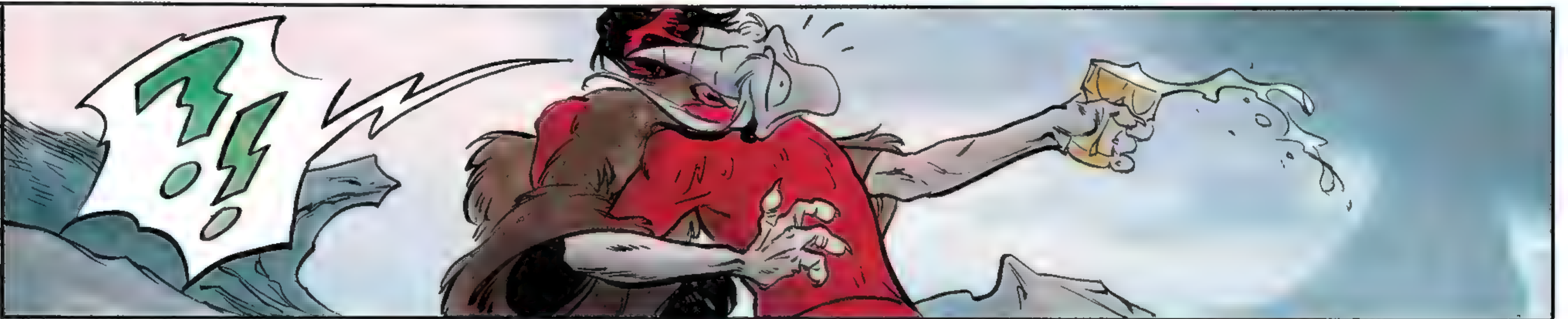
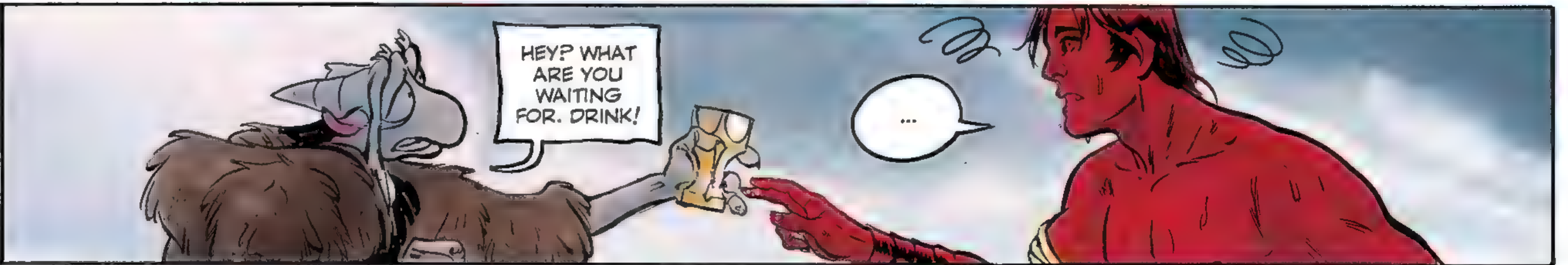
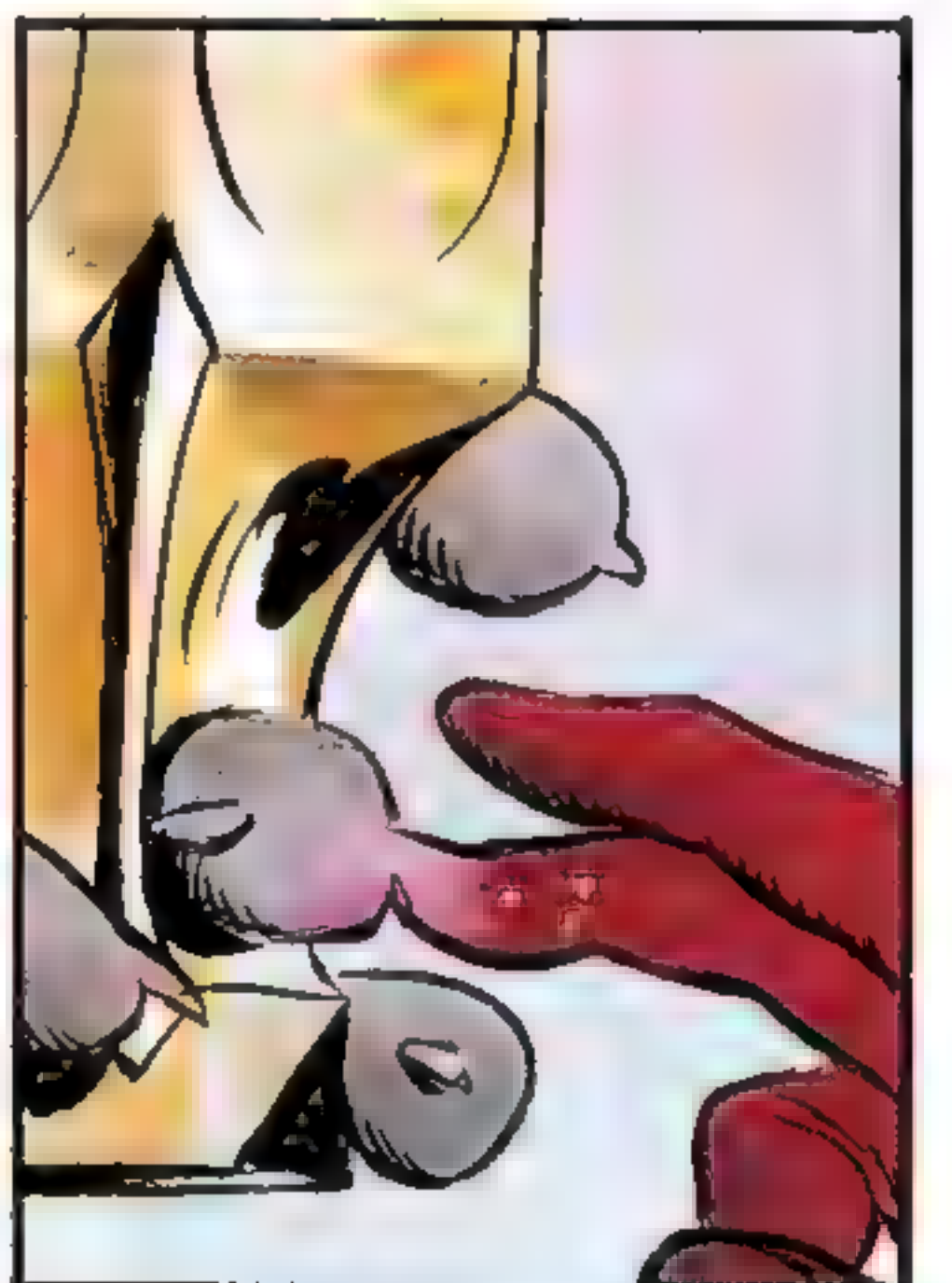
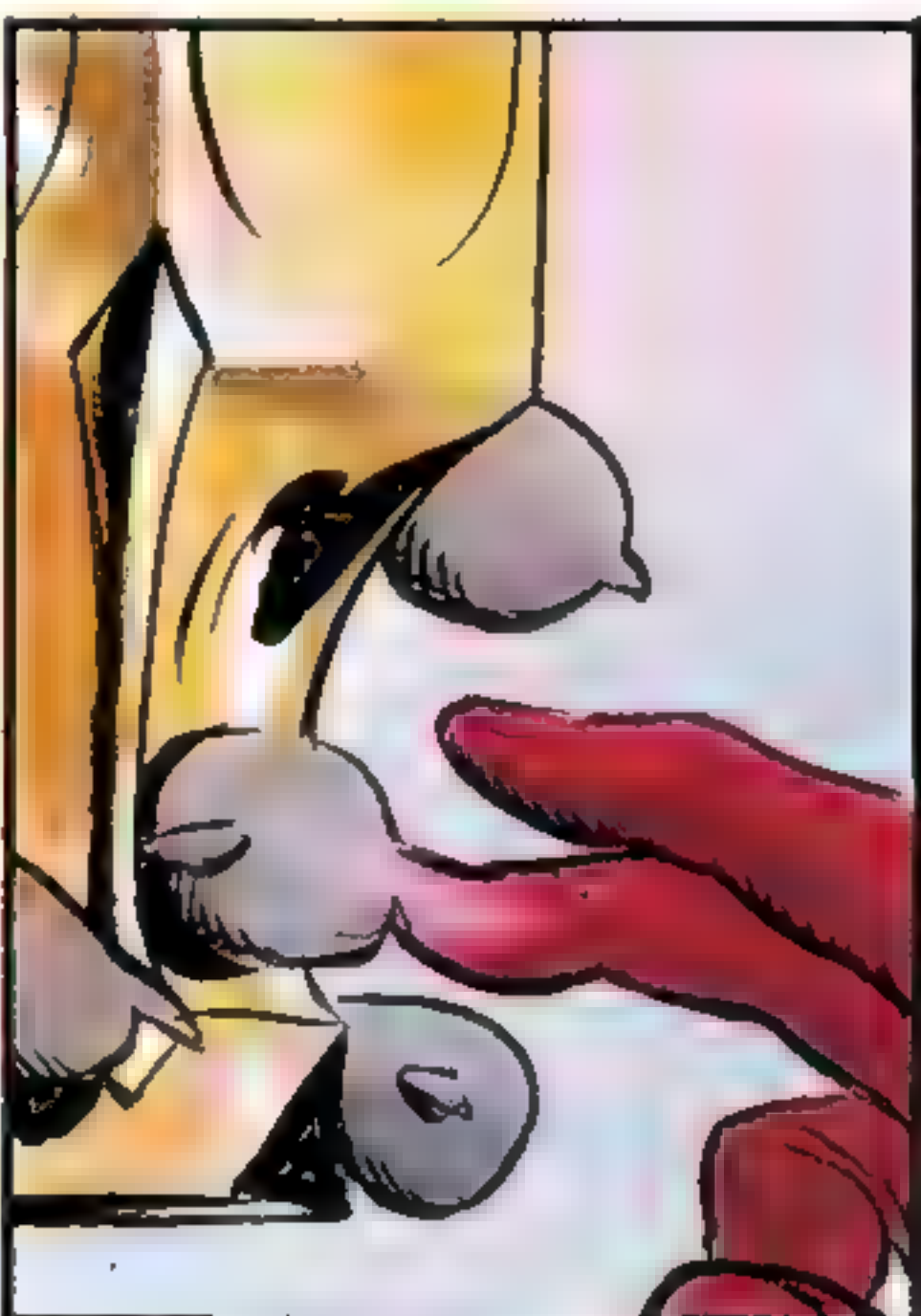
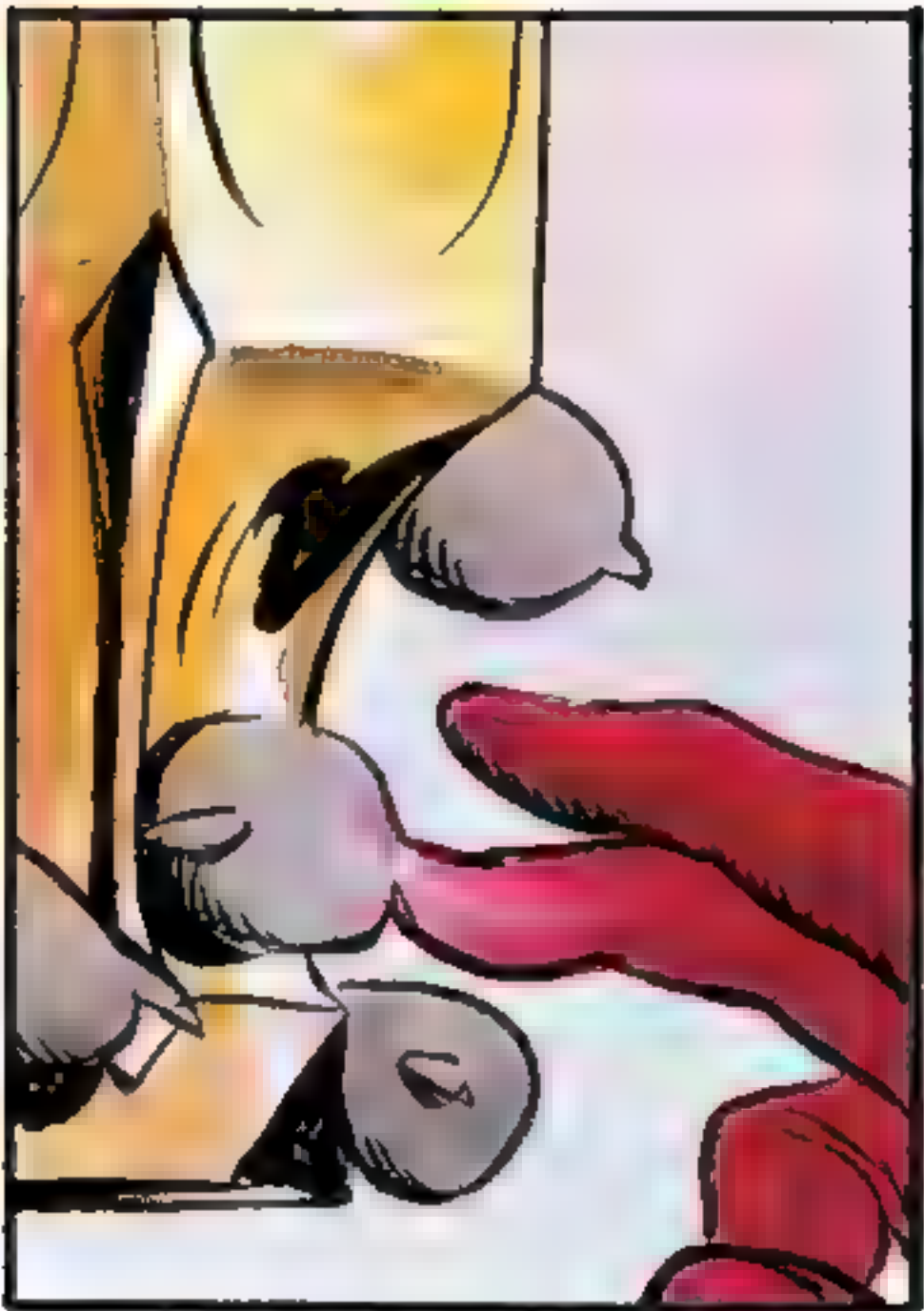
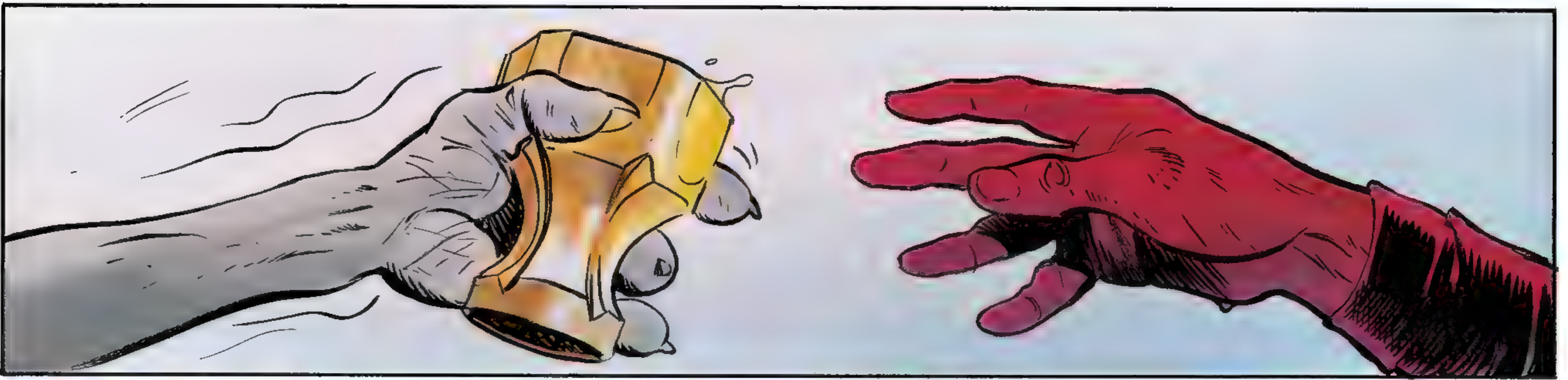
...LIKE
ME!

I AM NOT
YOU!



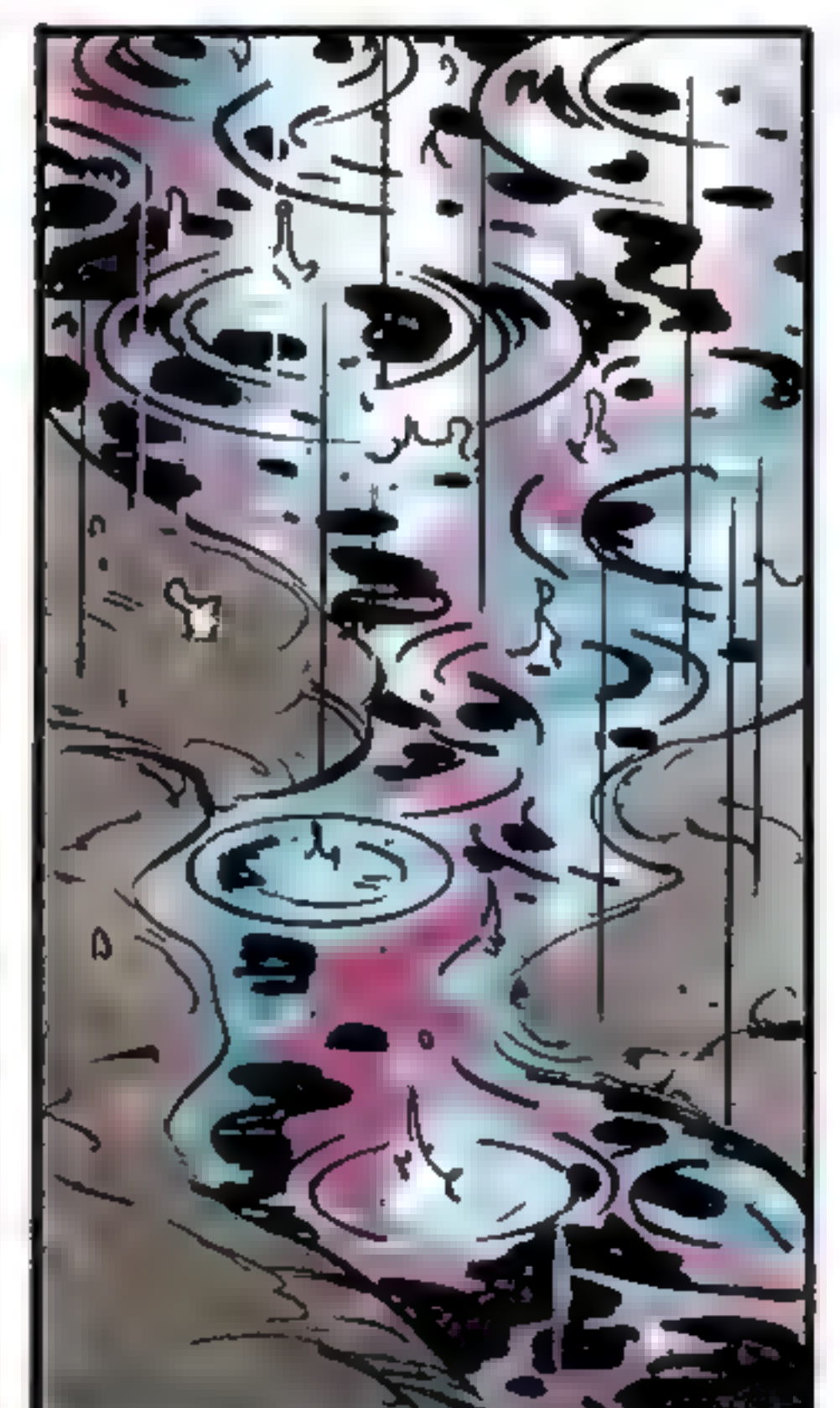
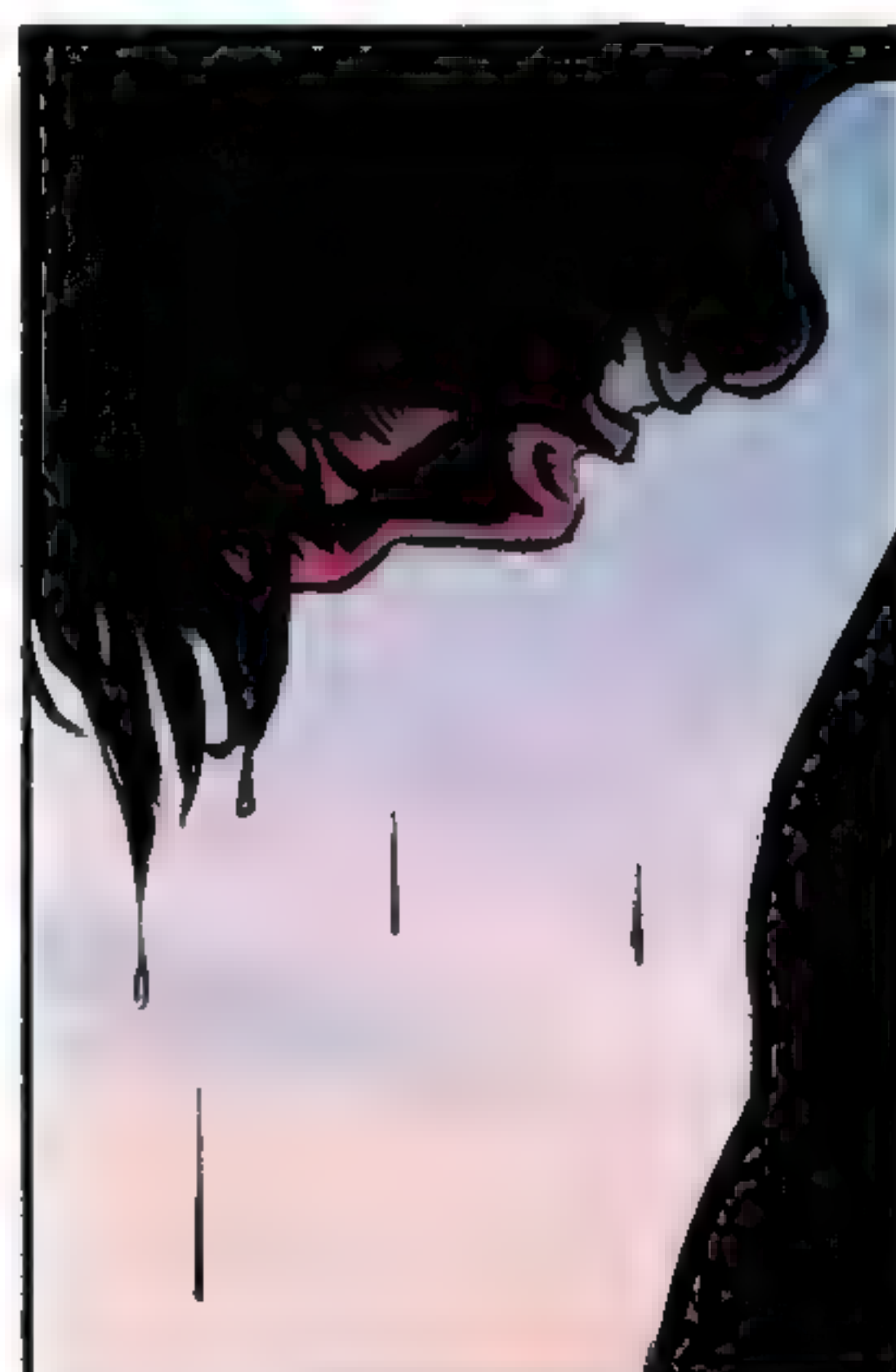
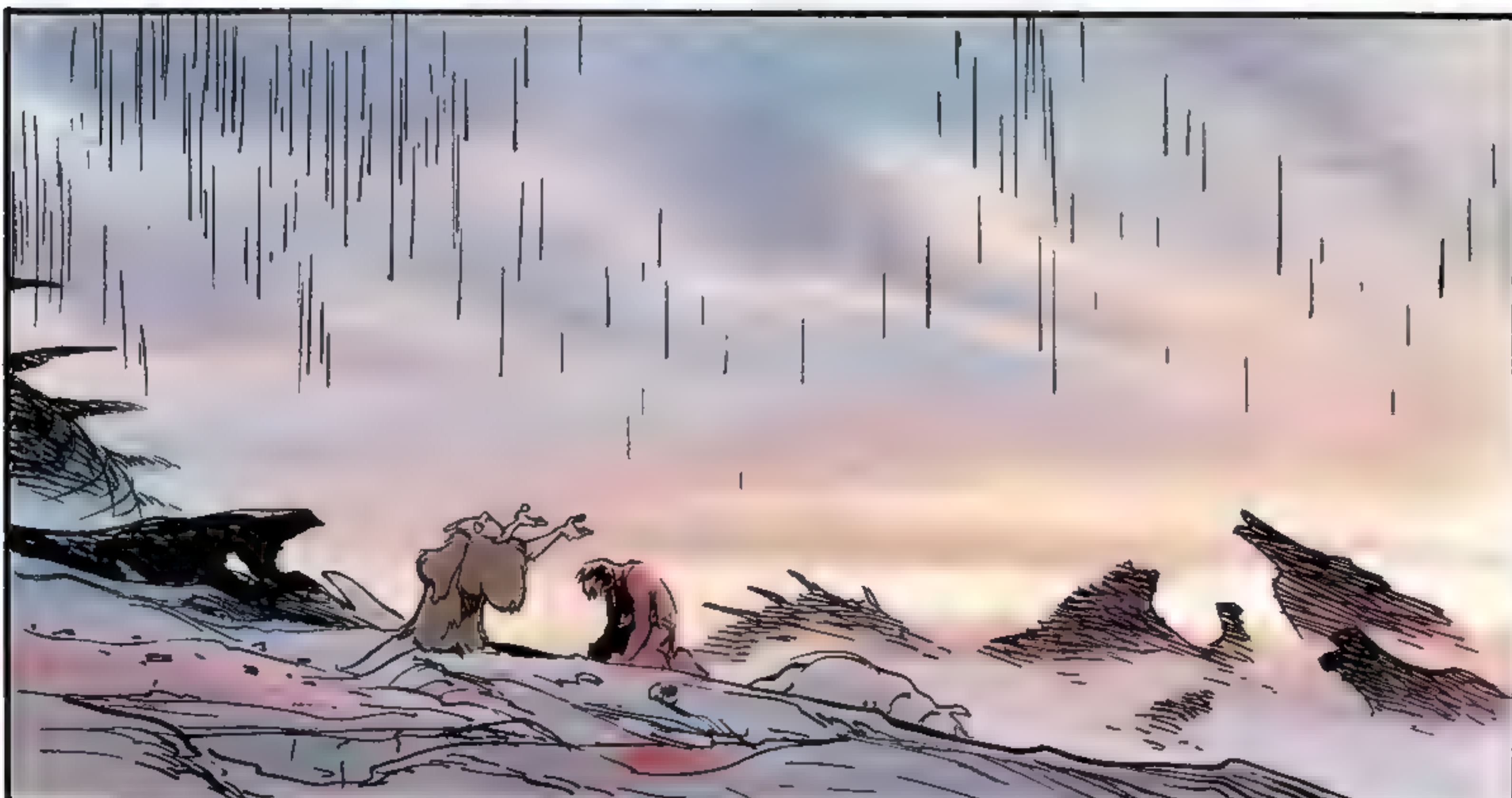
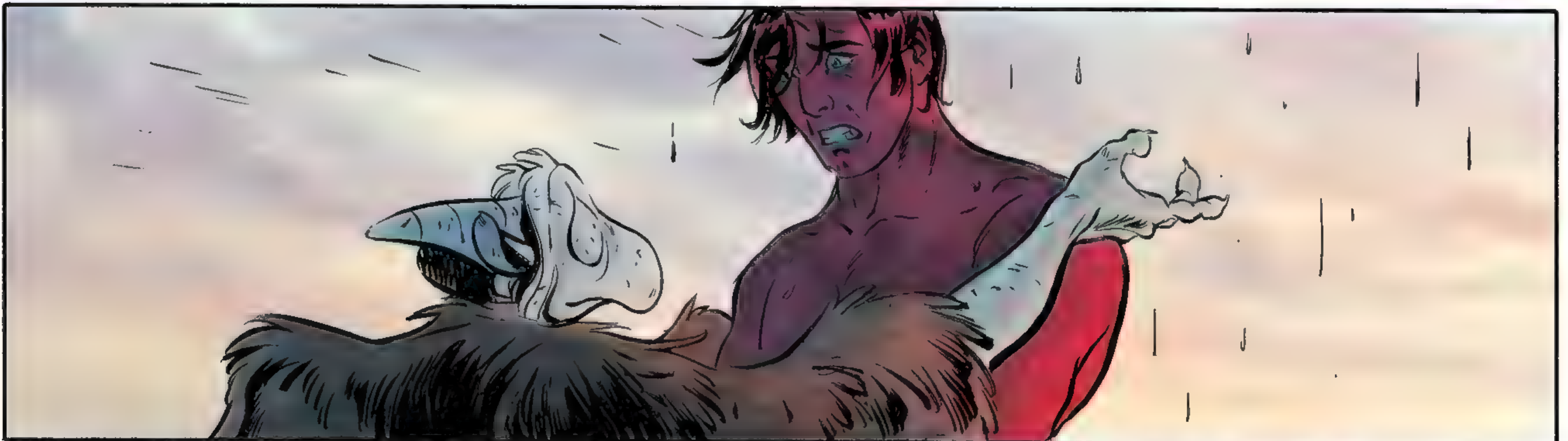
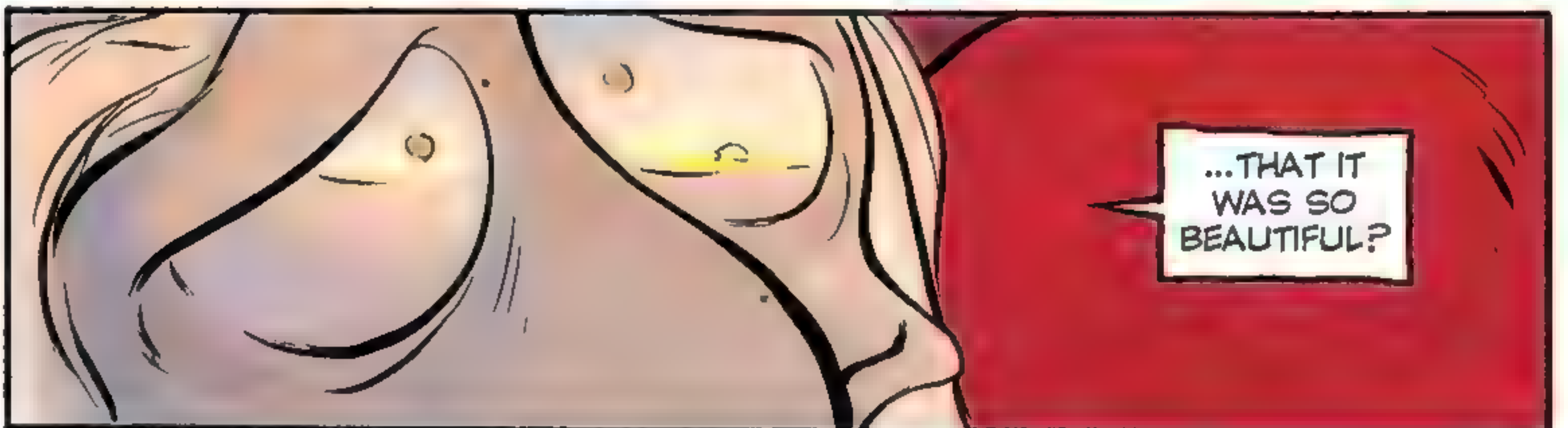
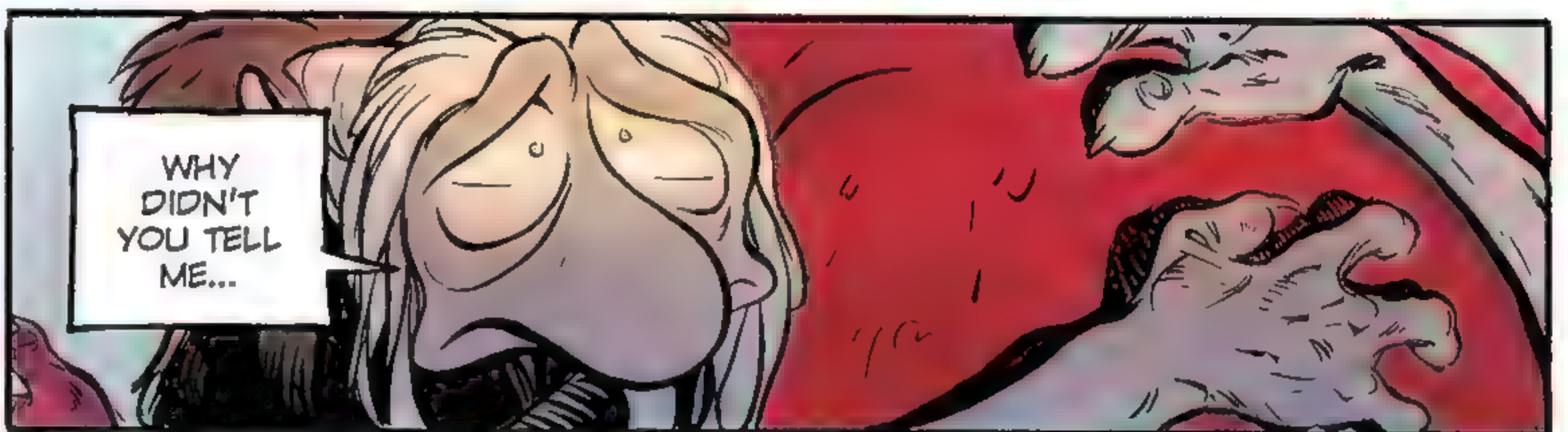
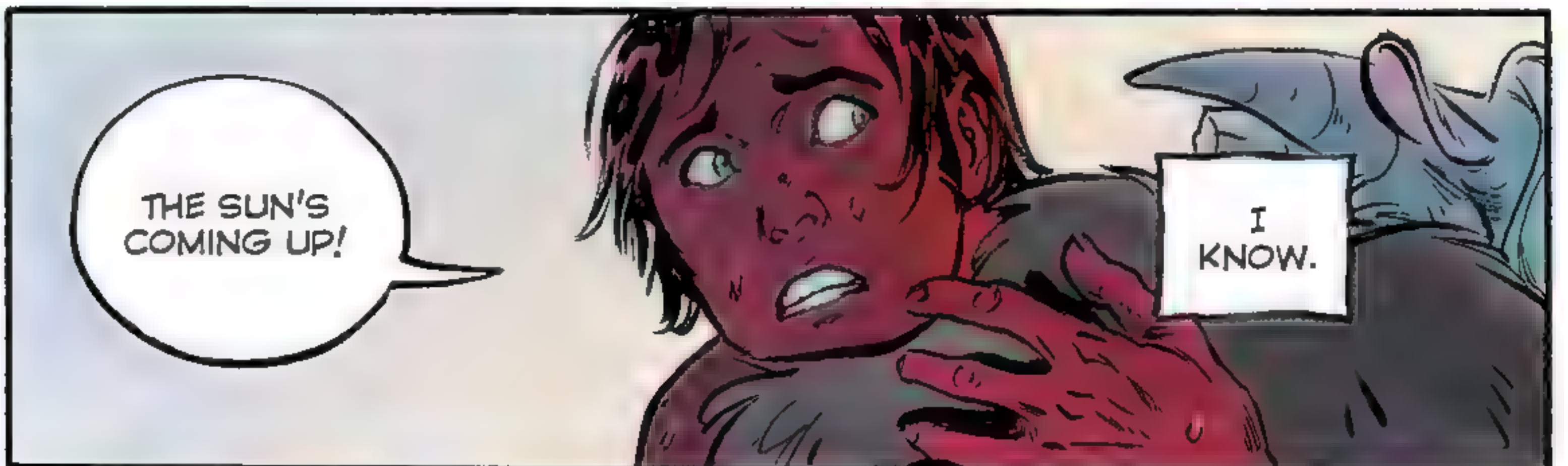
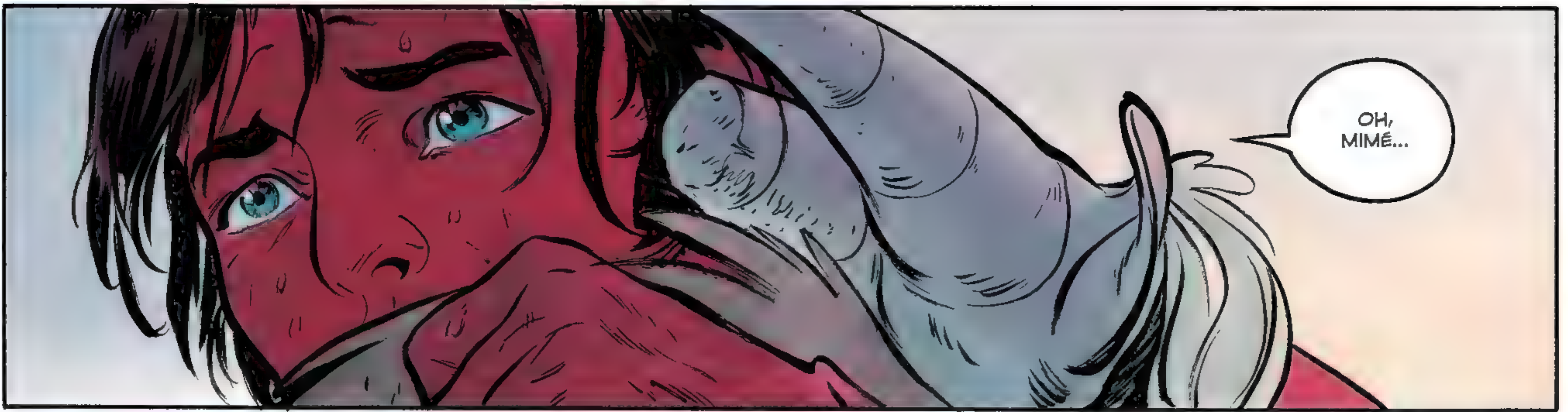


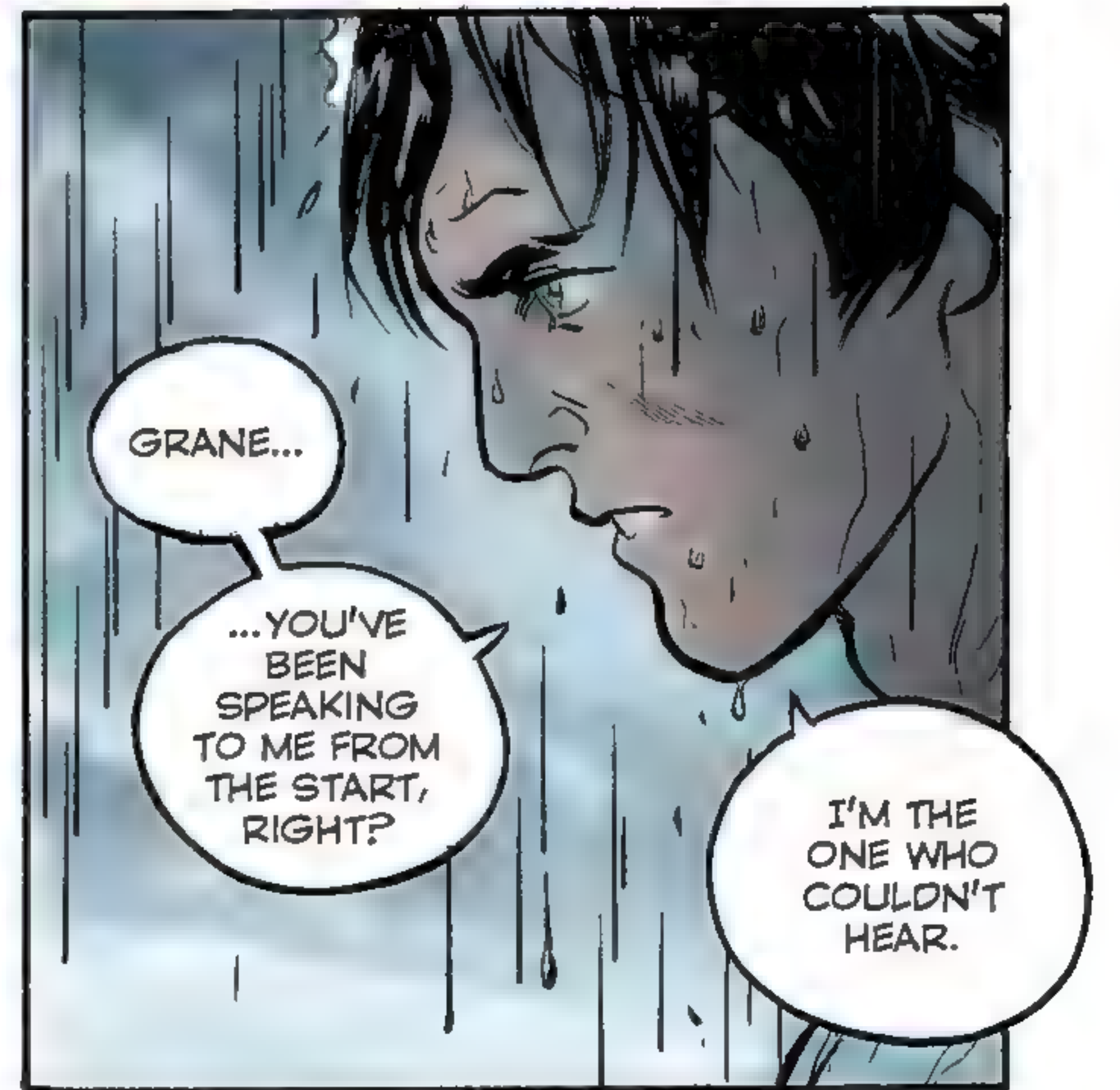
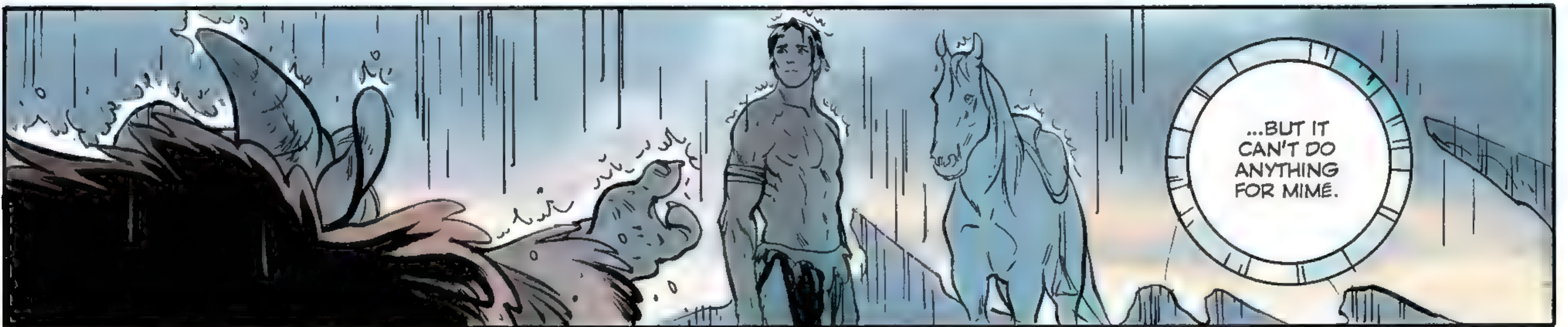
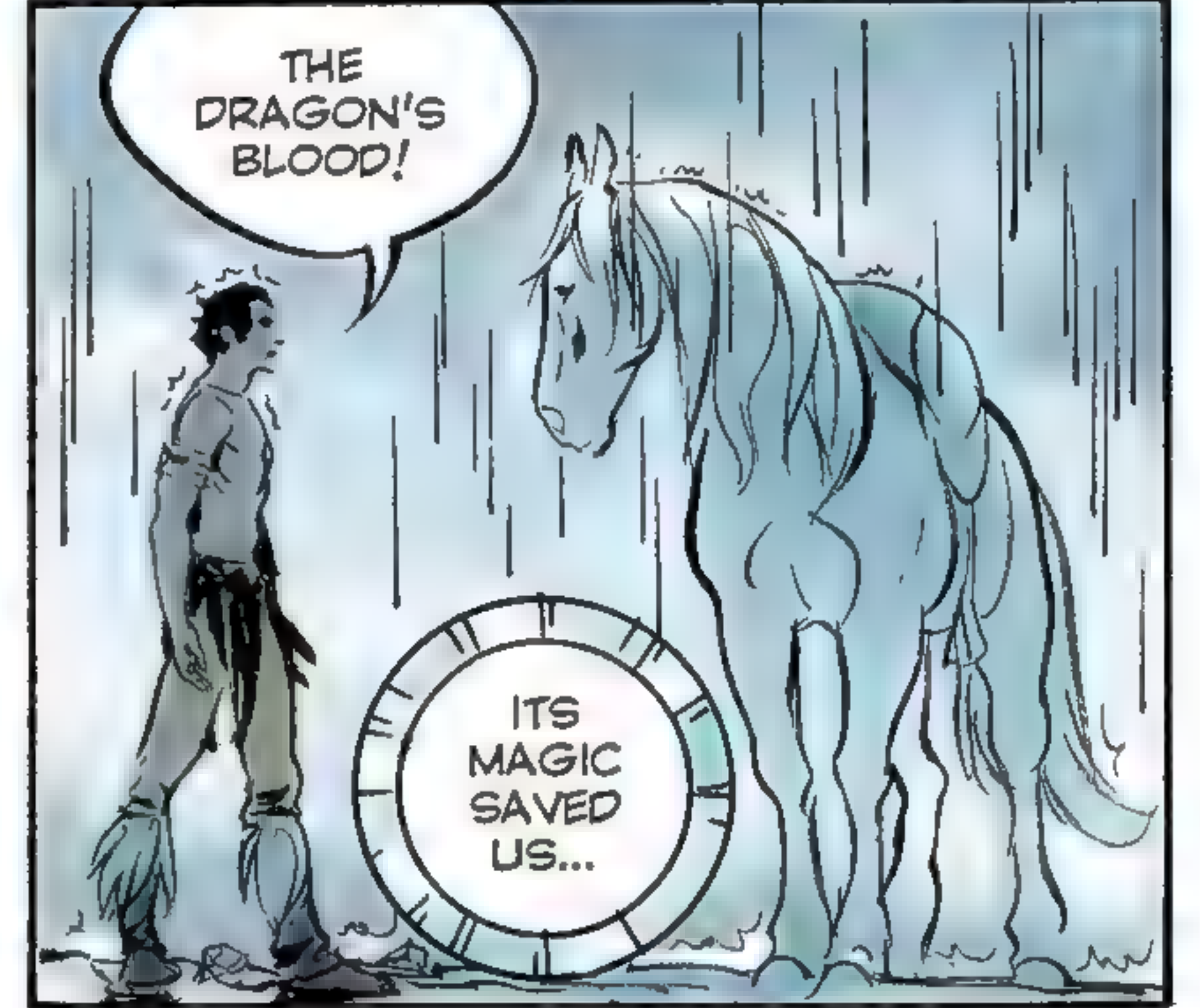
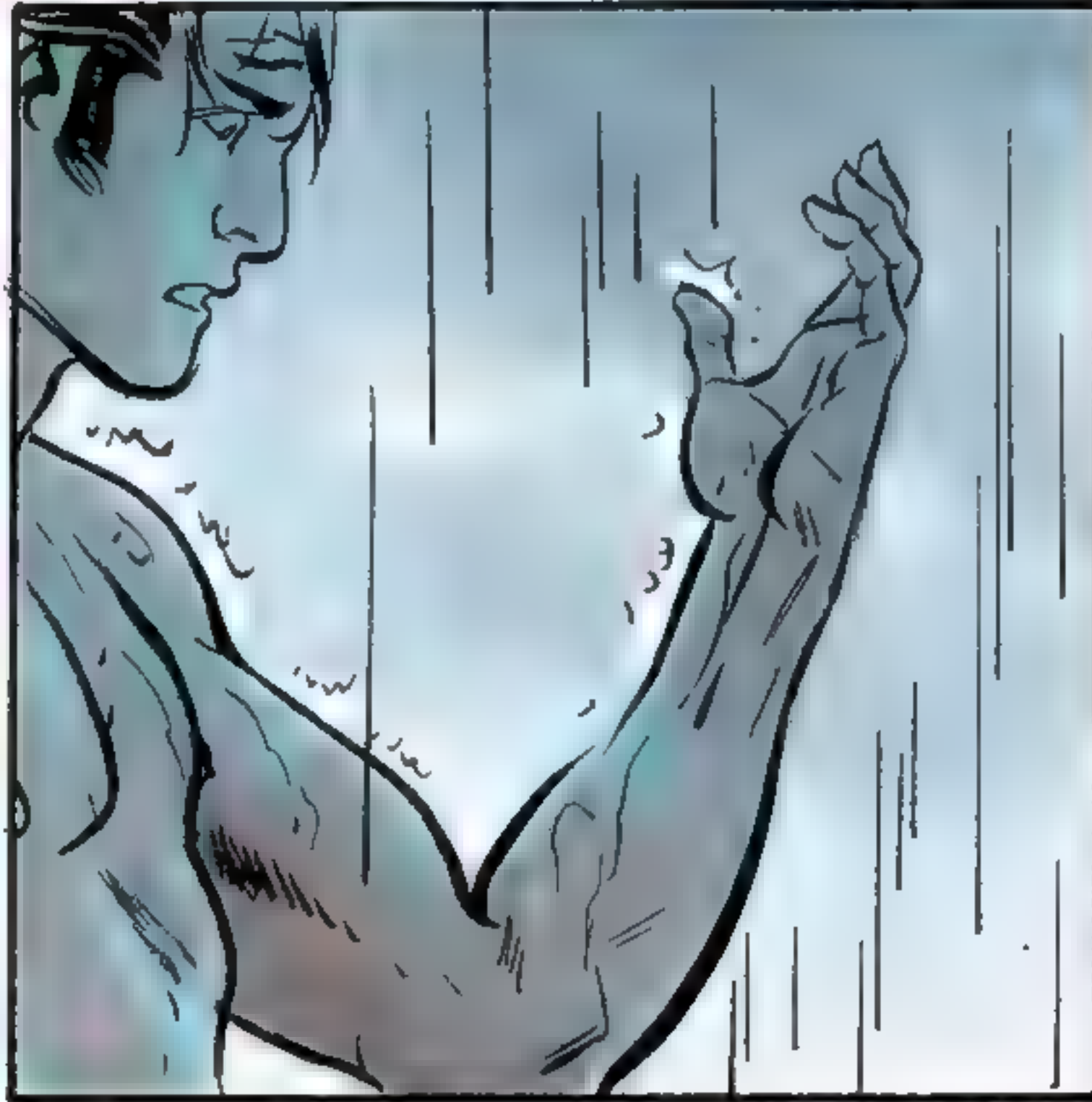
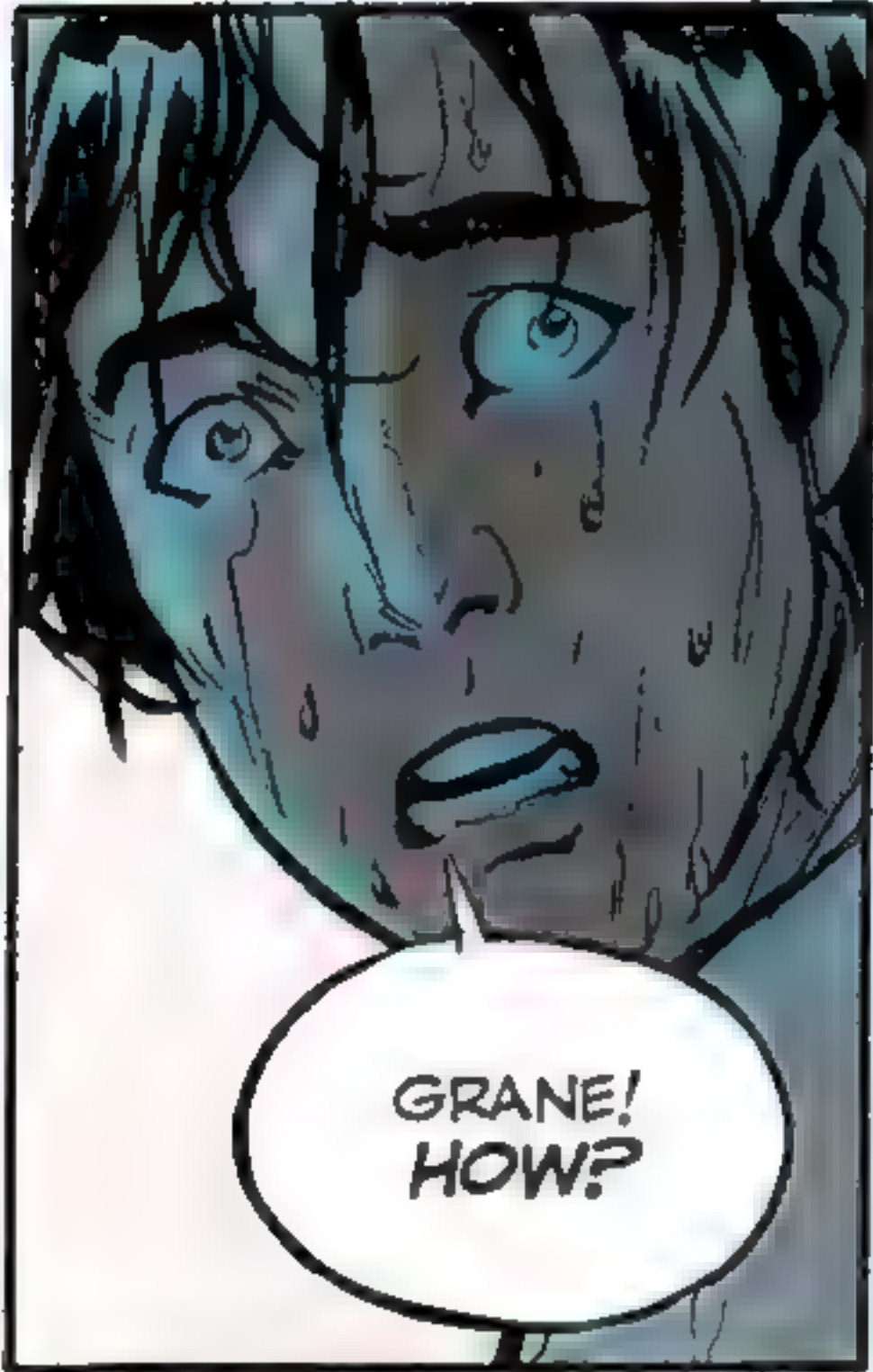
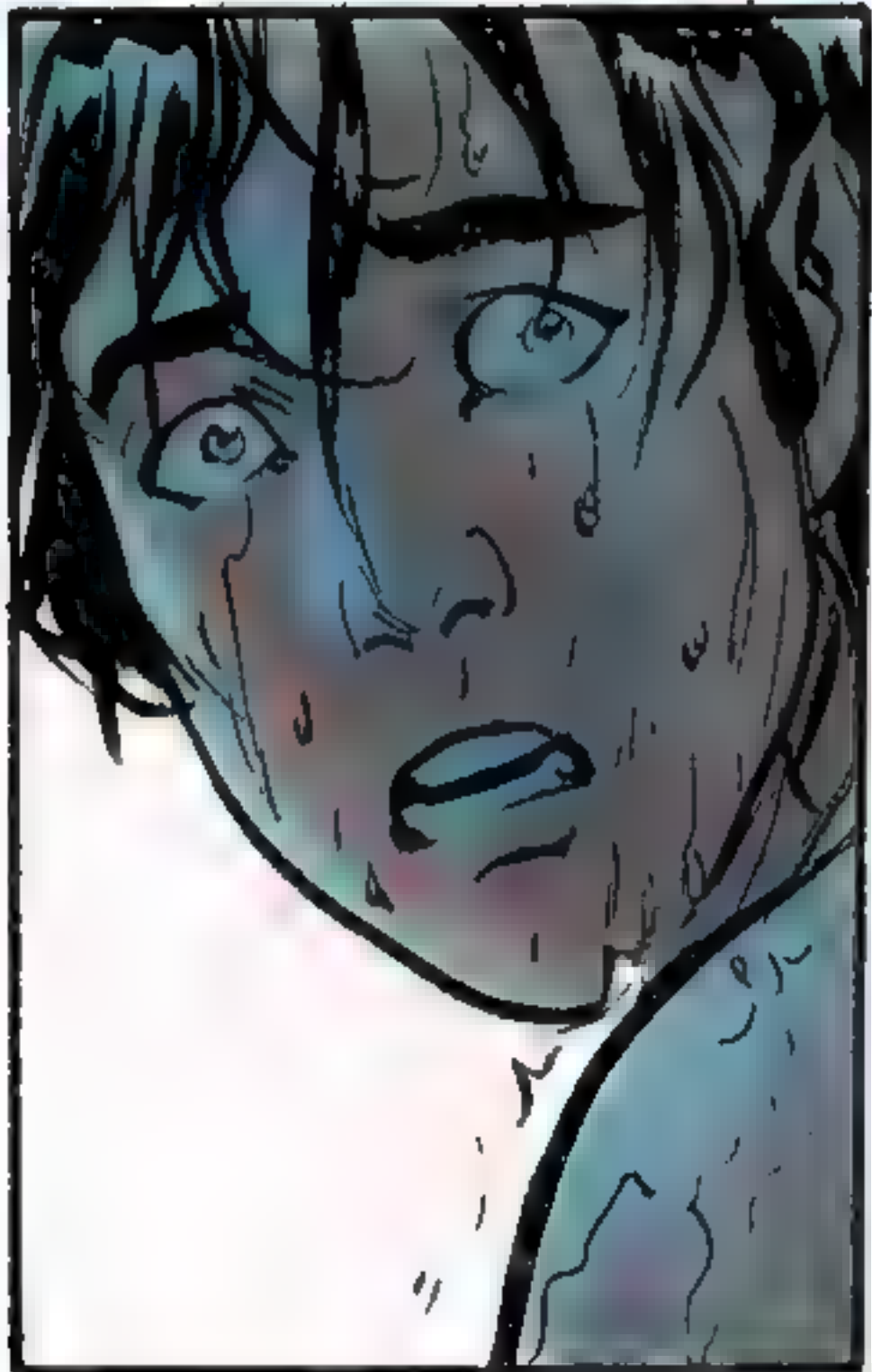
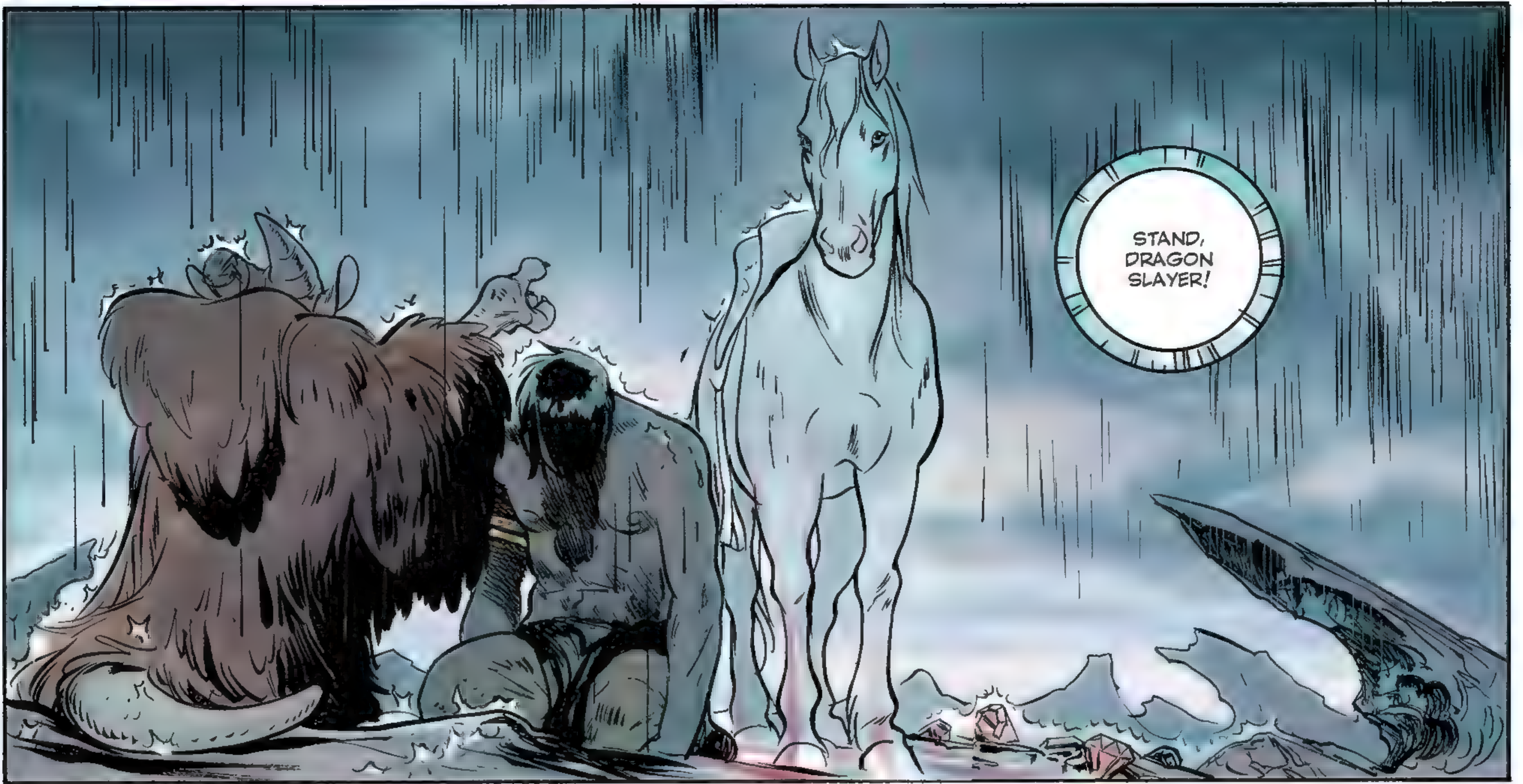


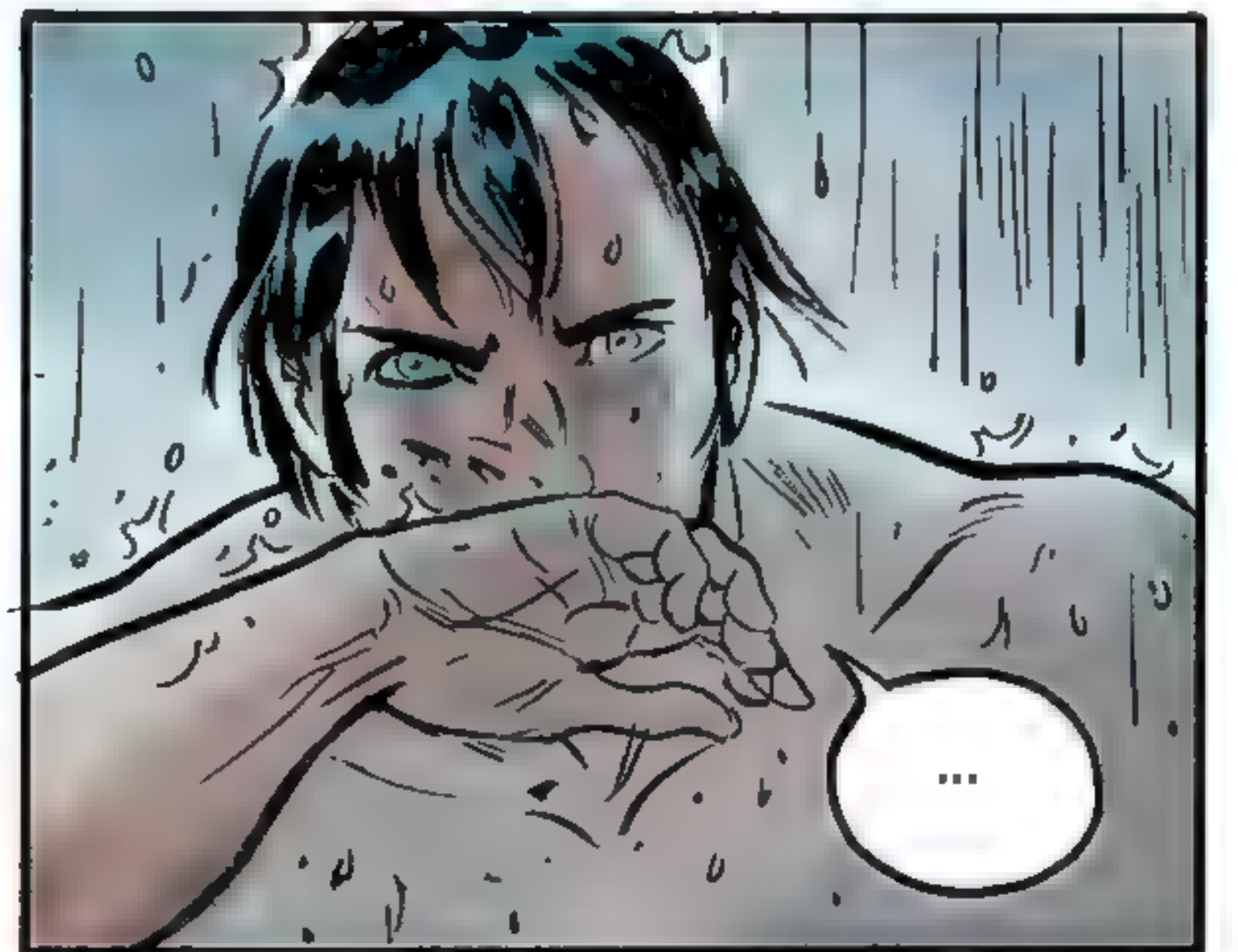
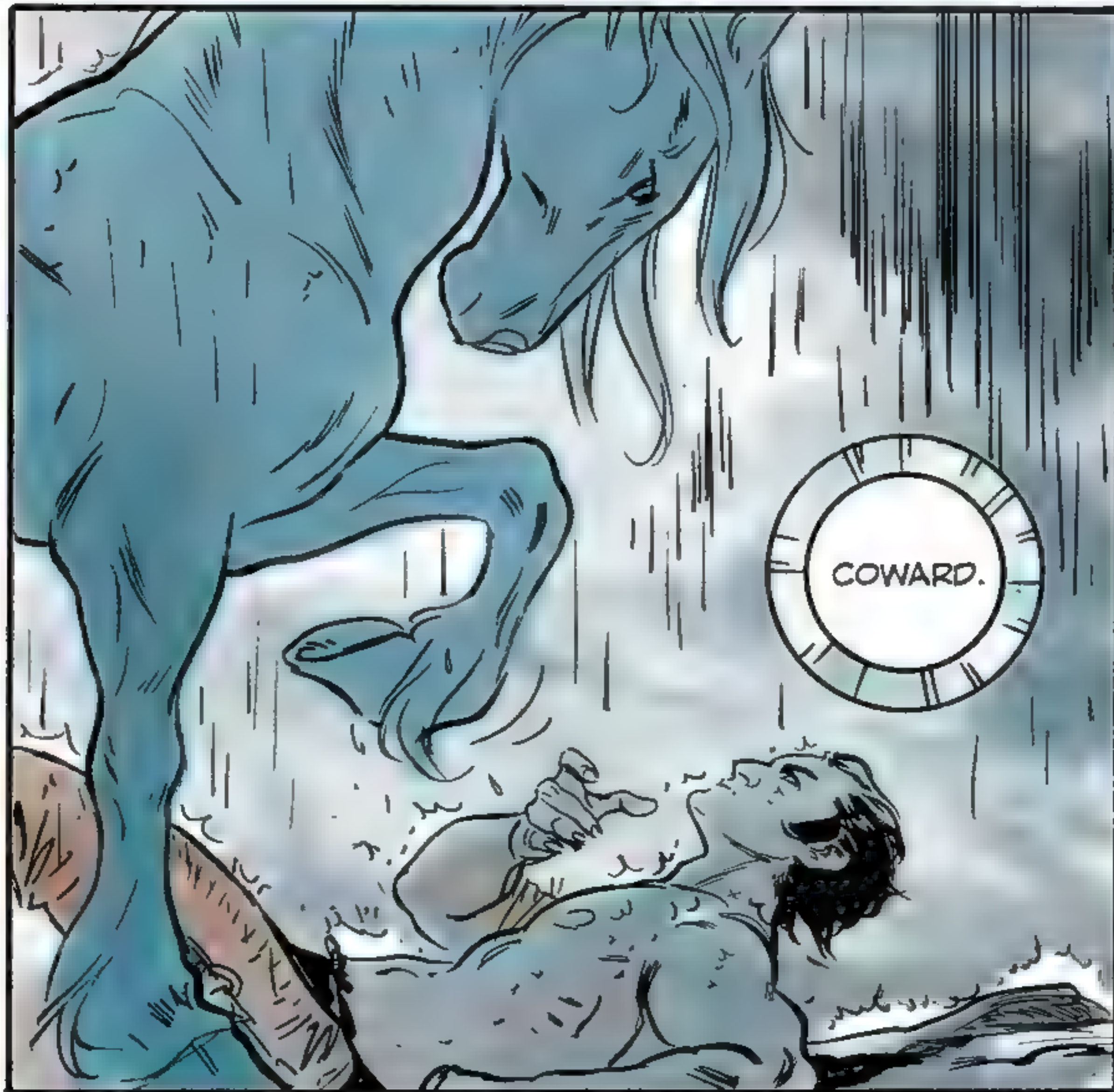
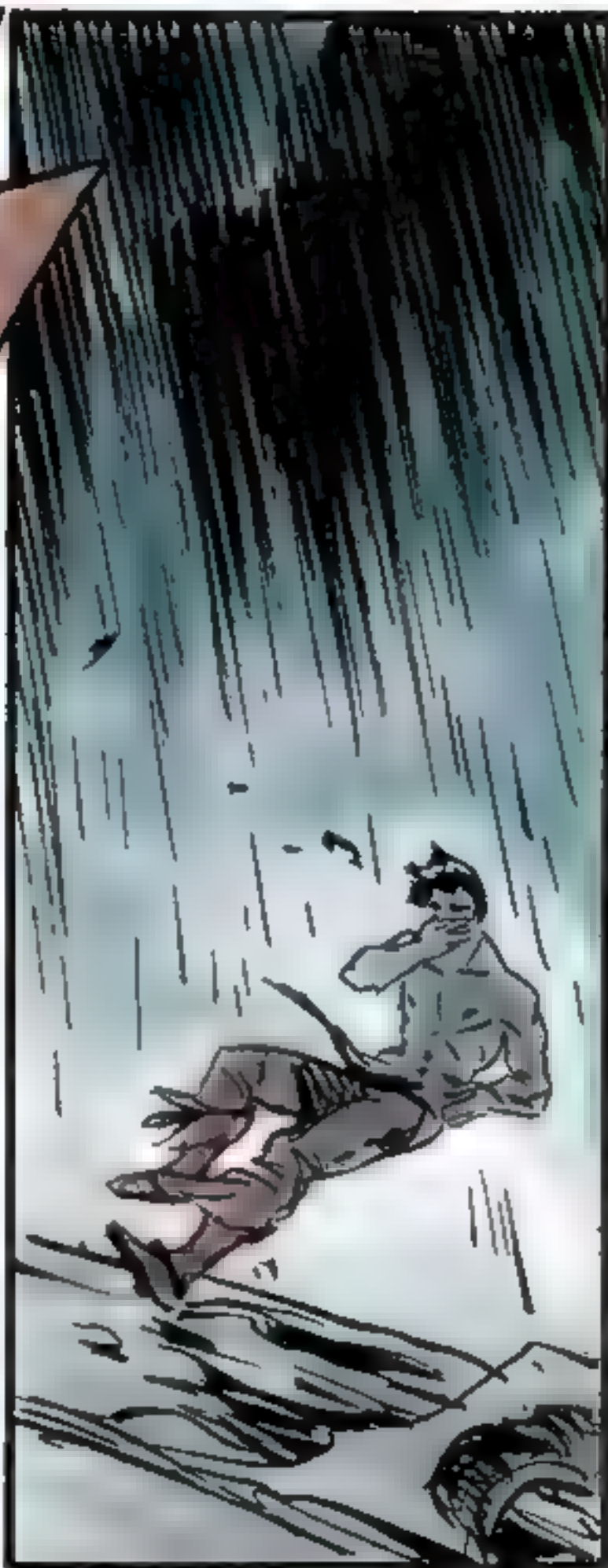
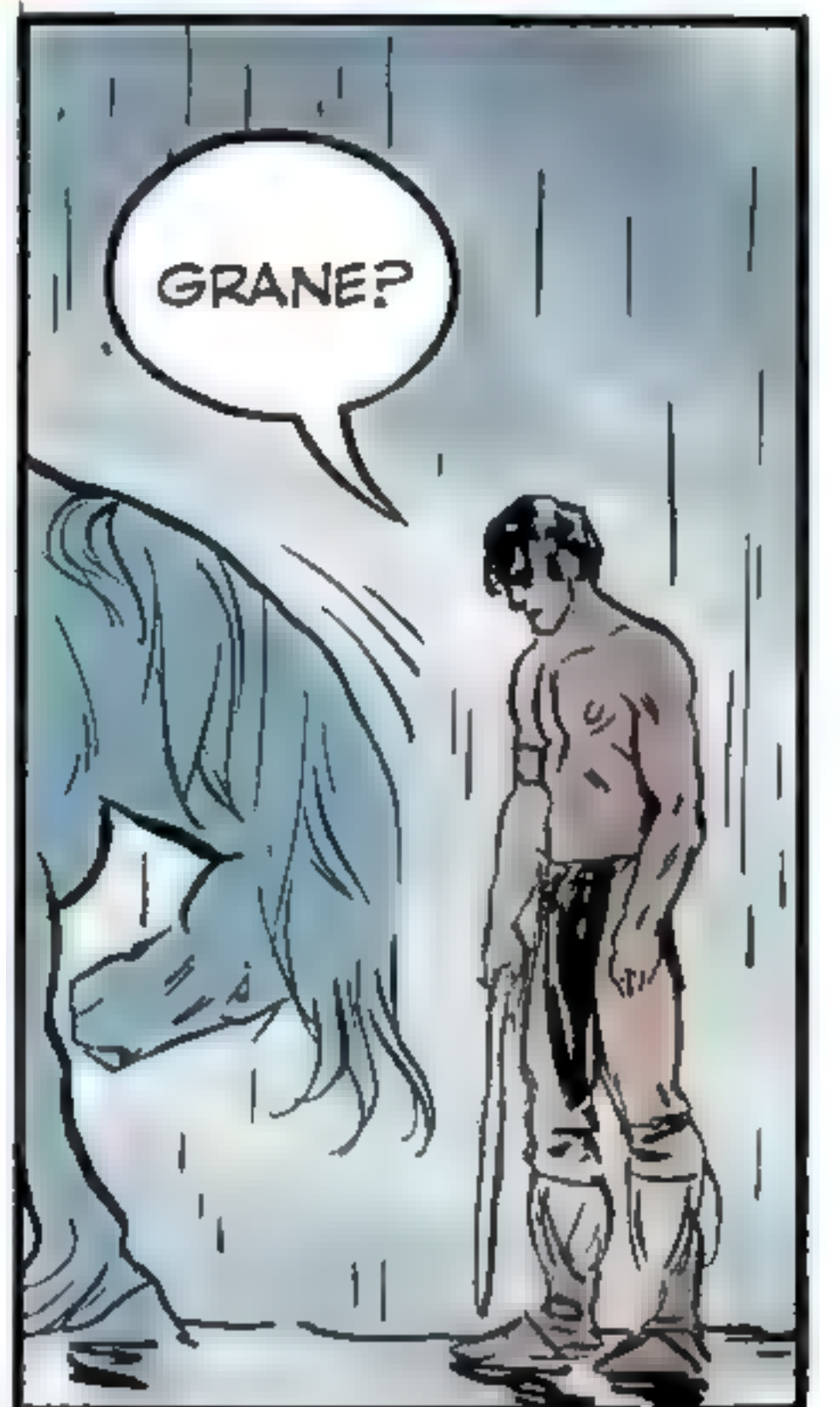
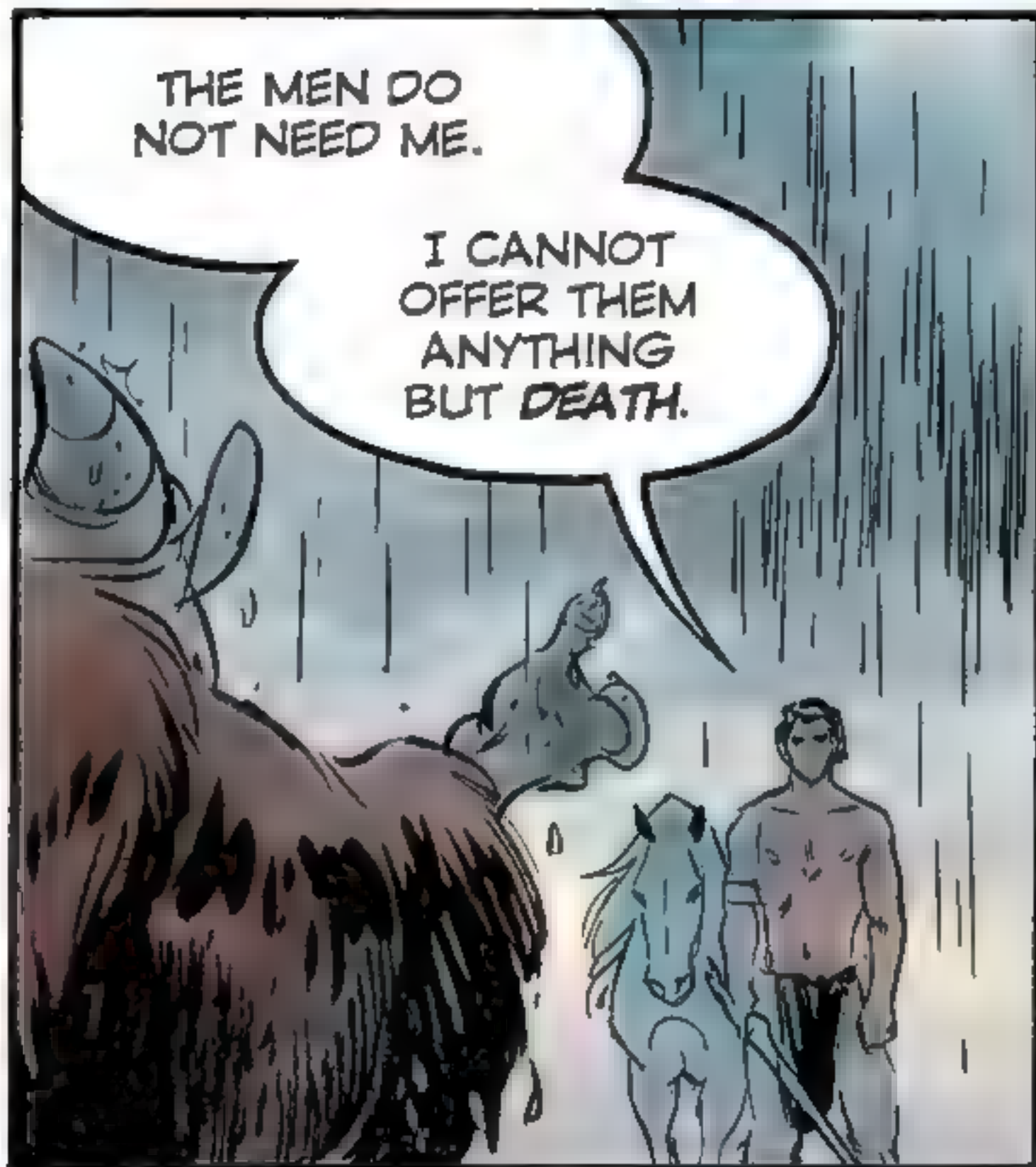
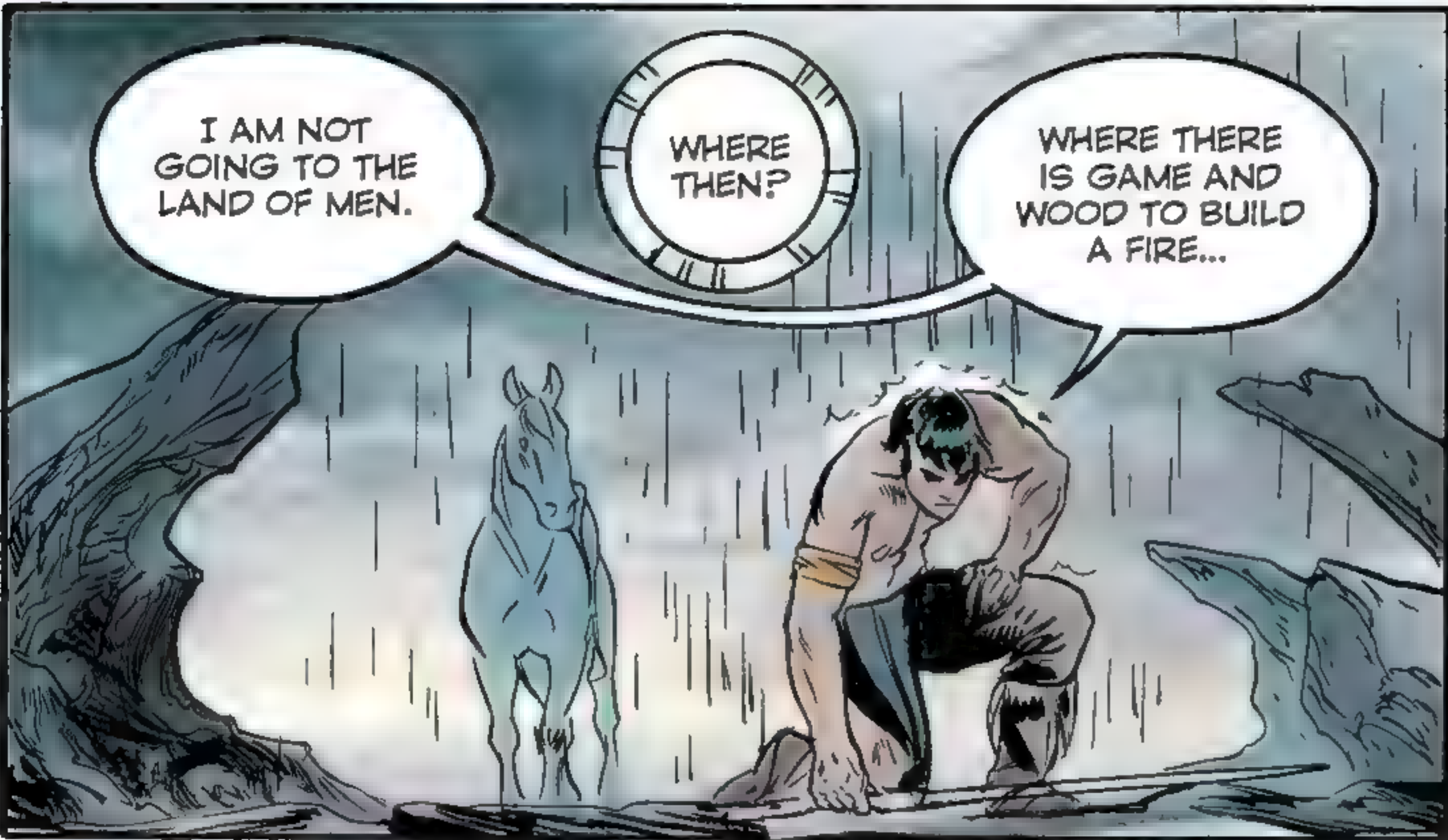
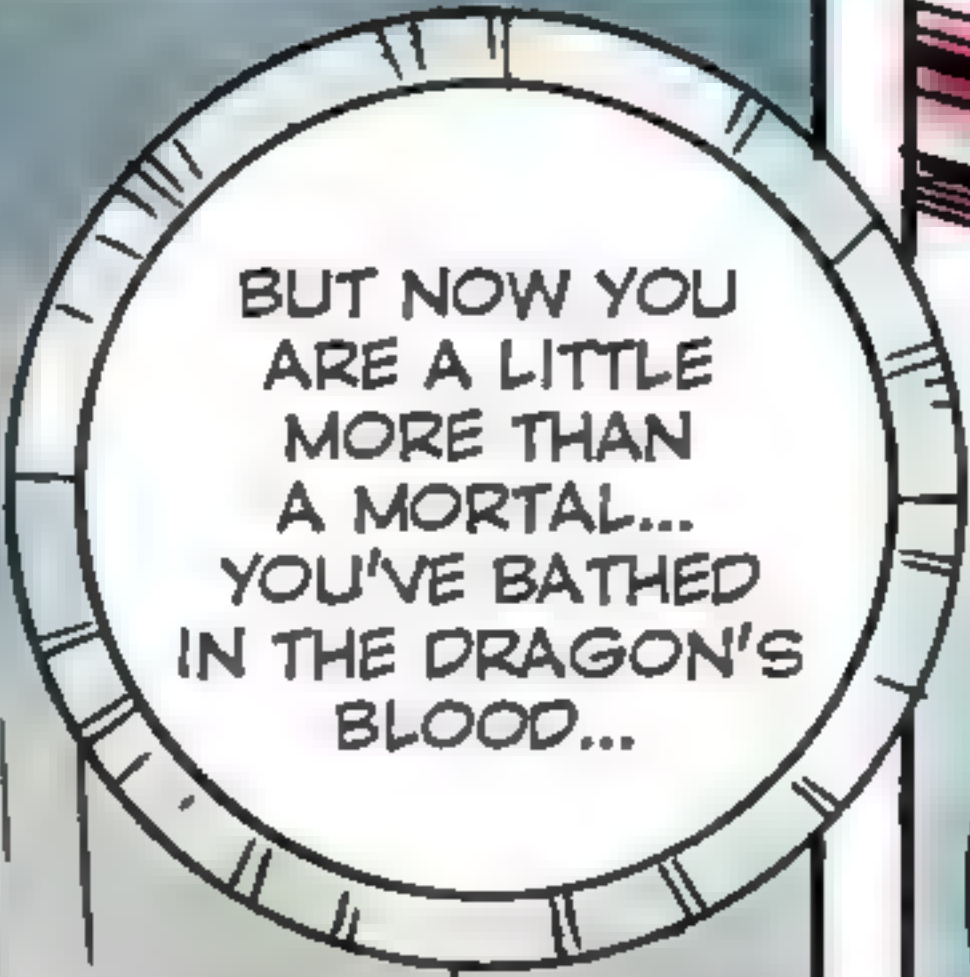
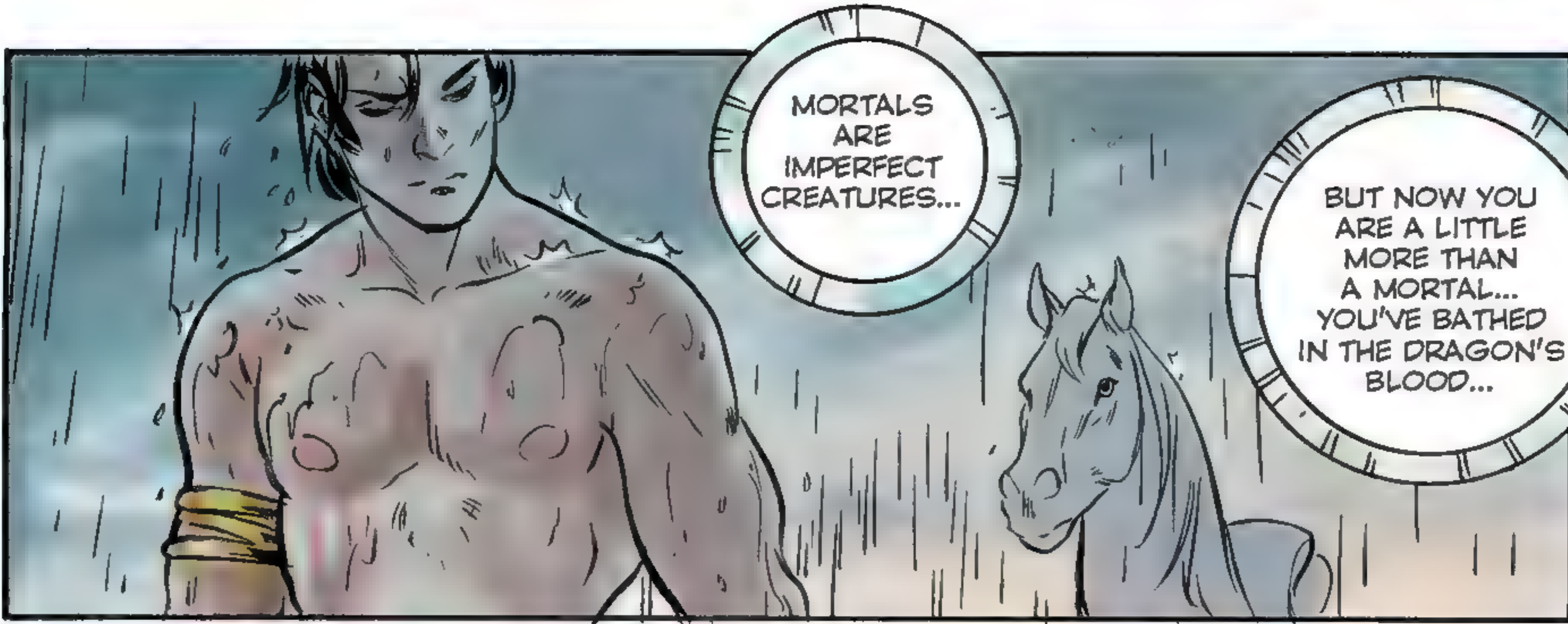


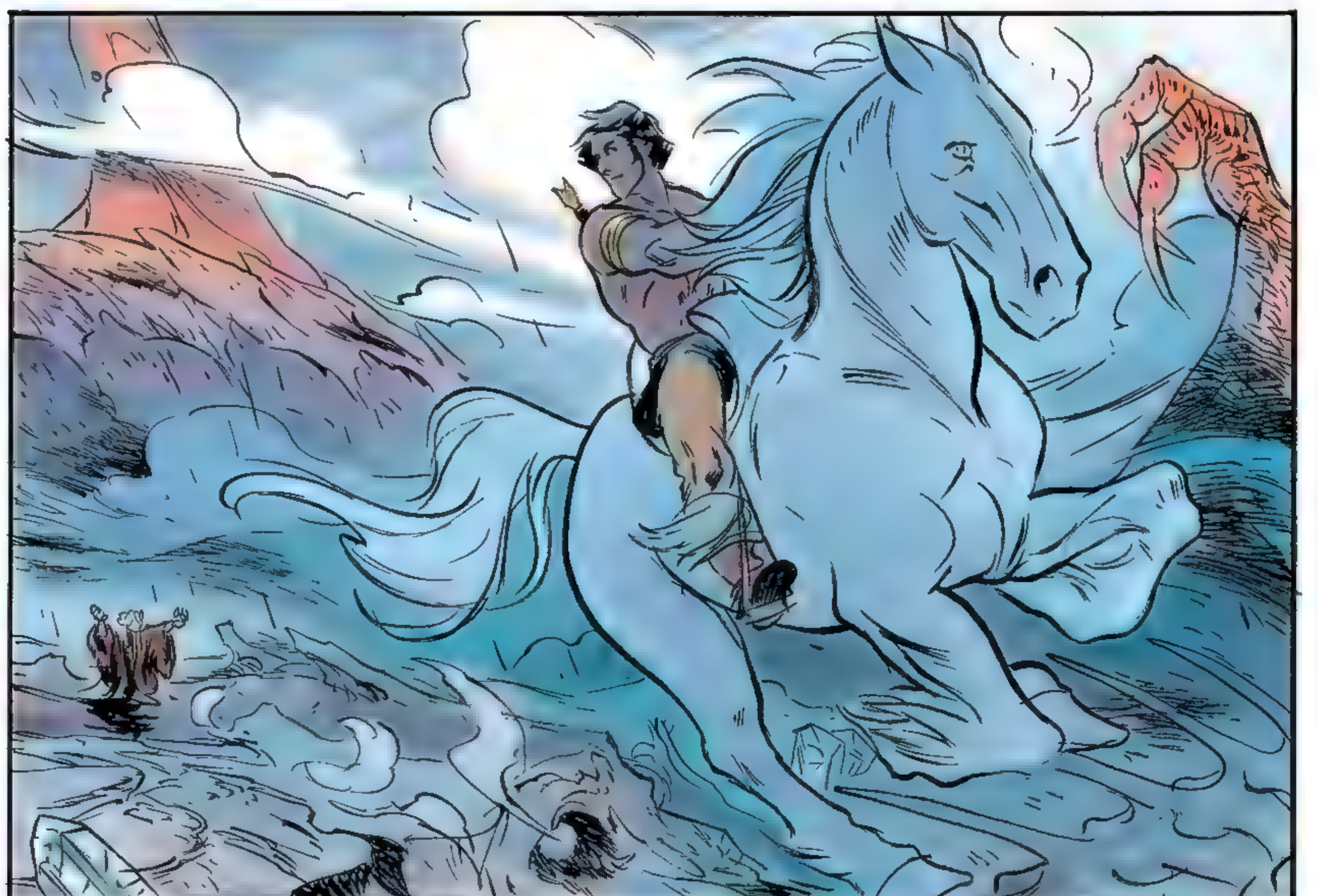
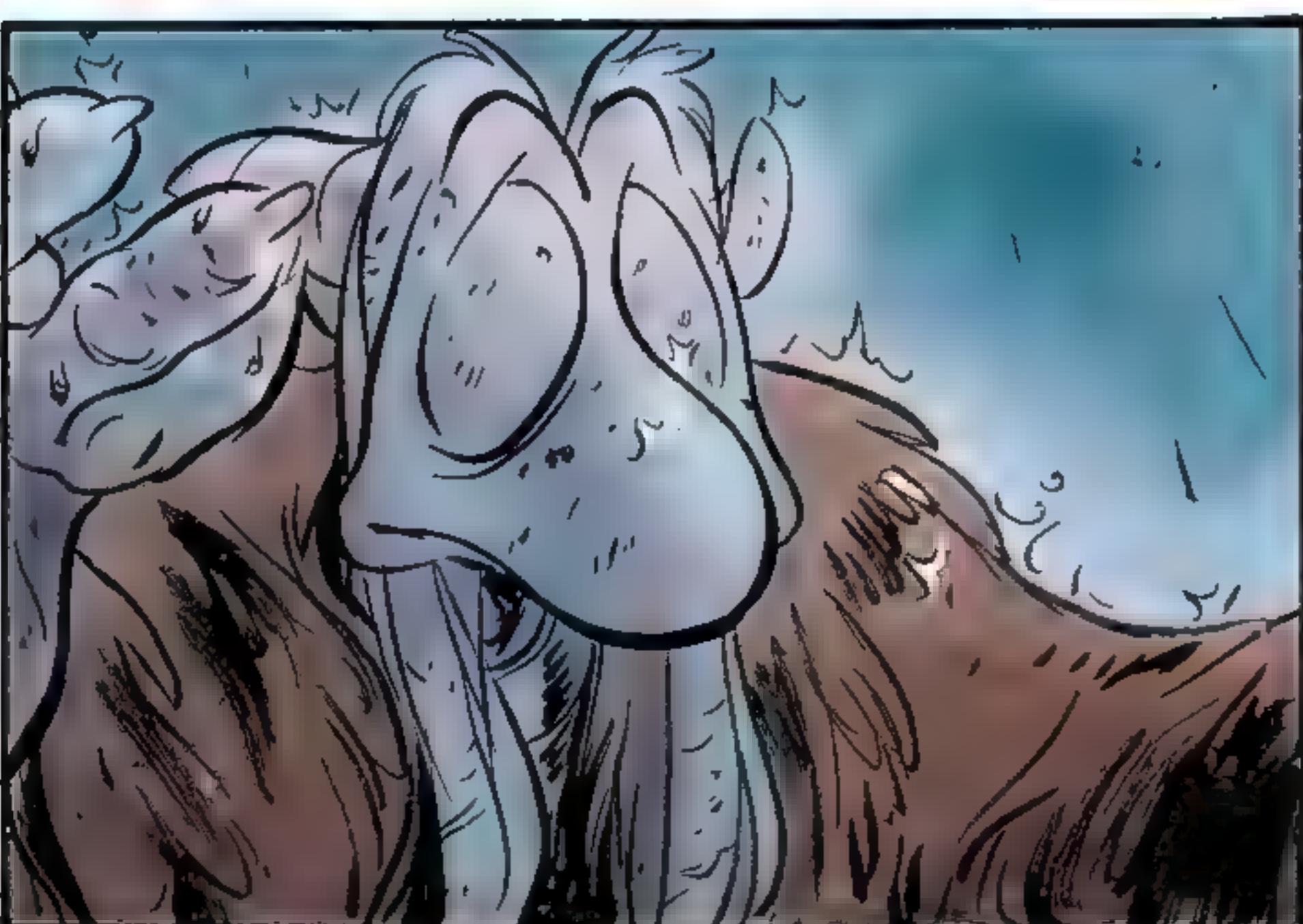
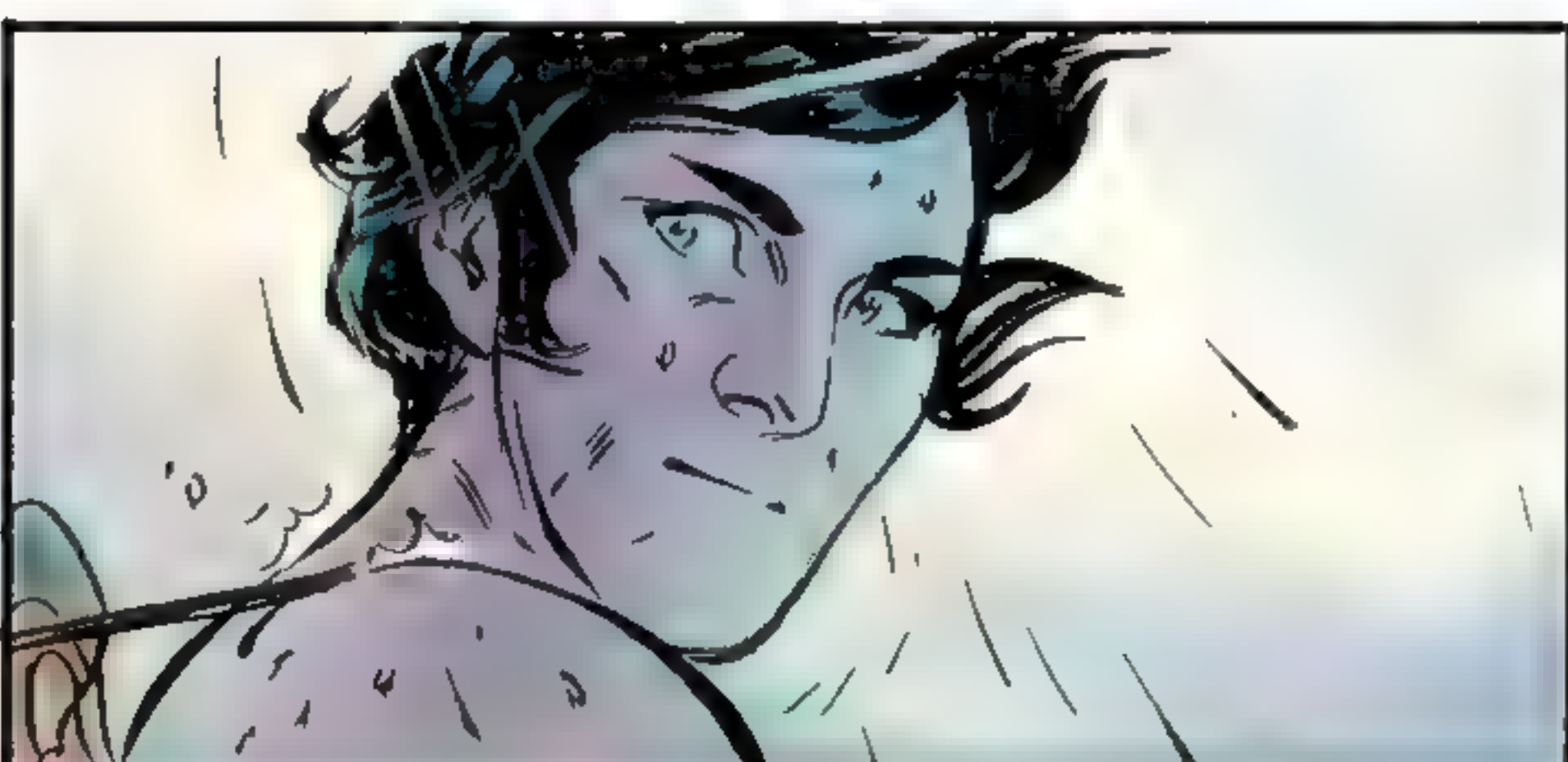
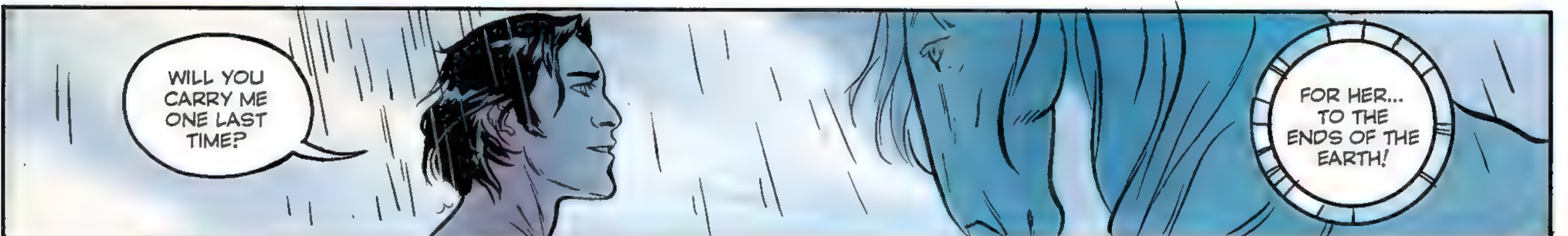
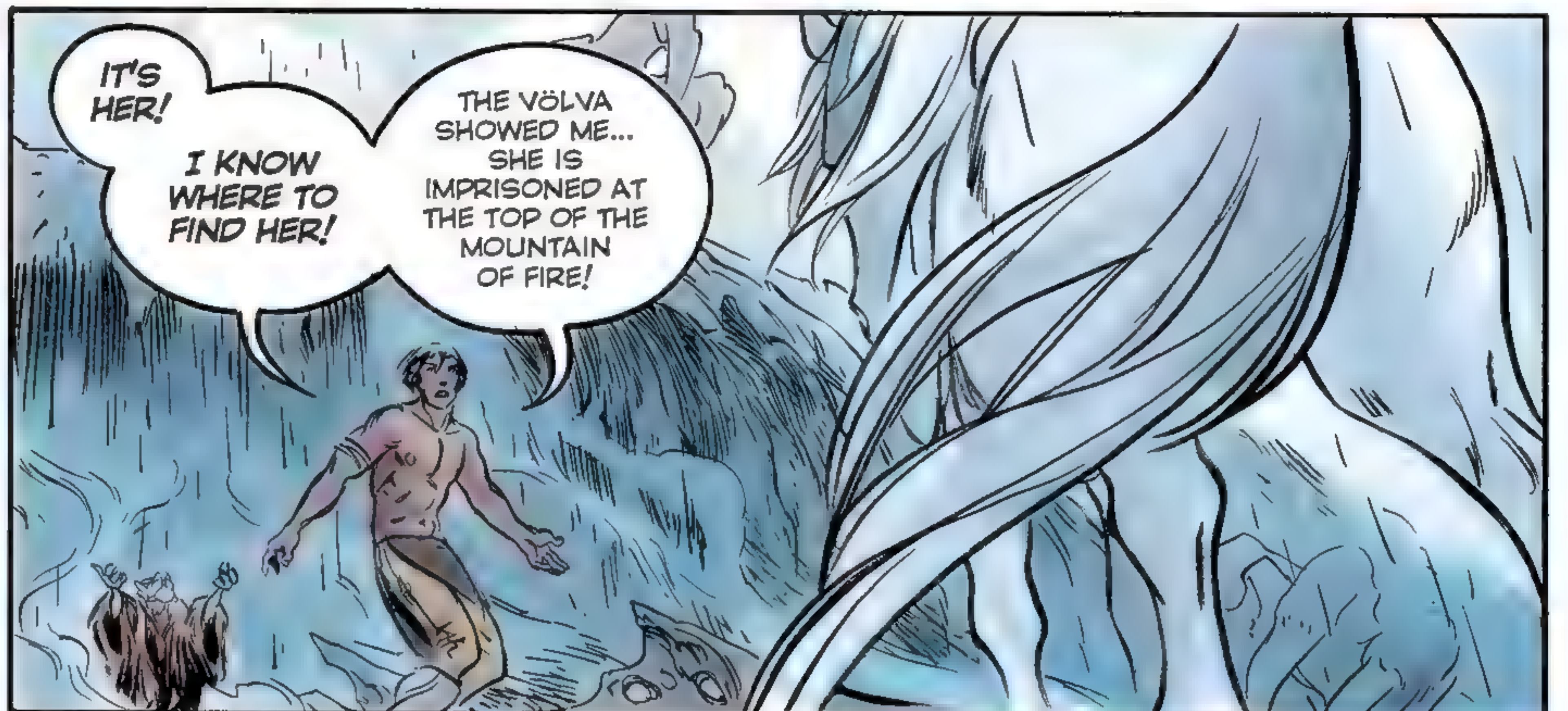
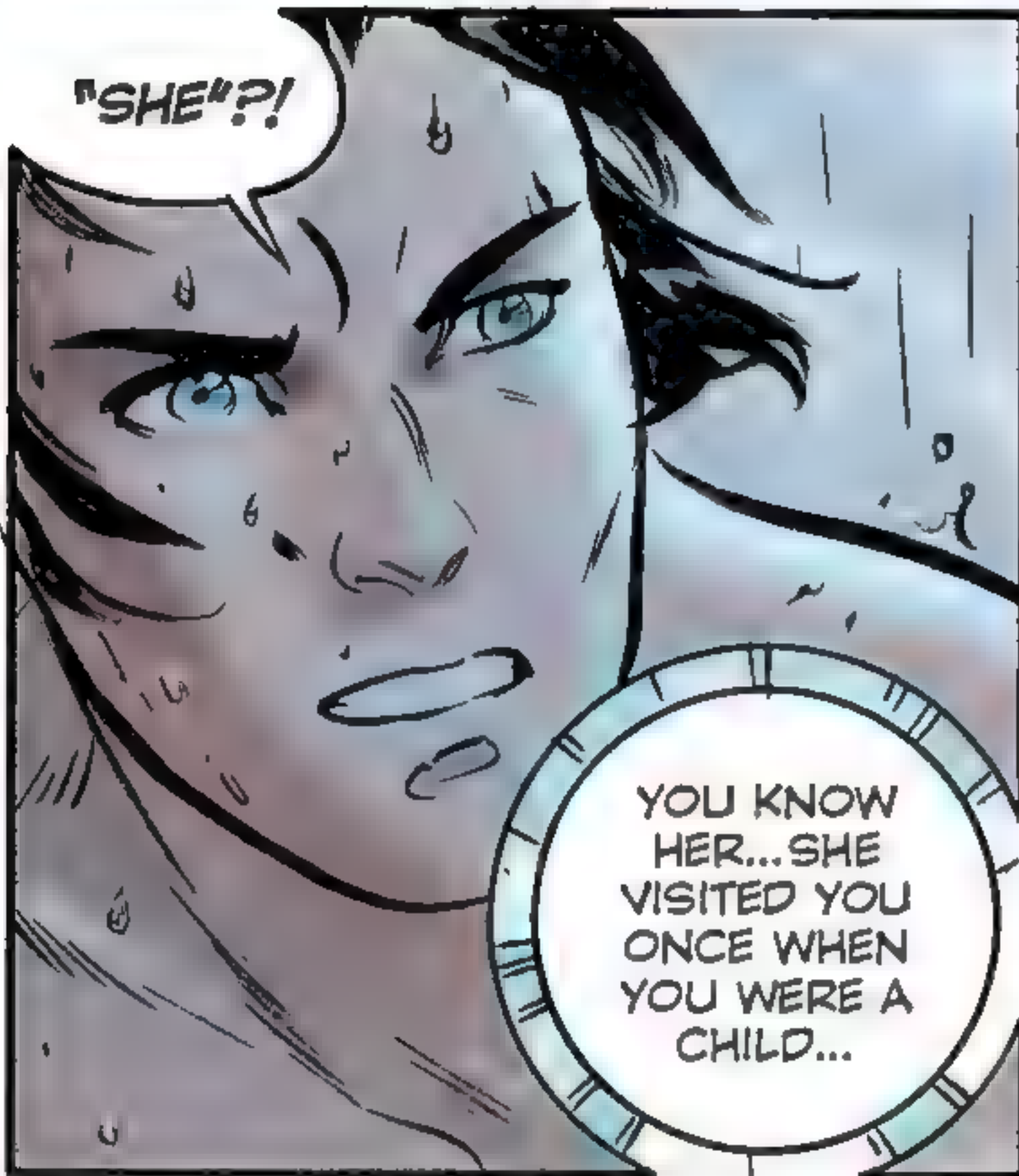
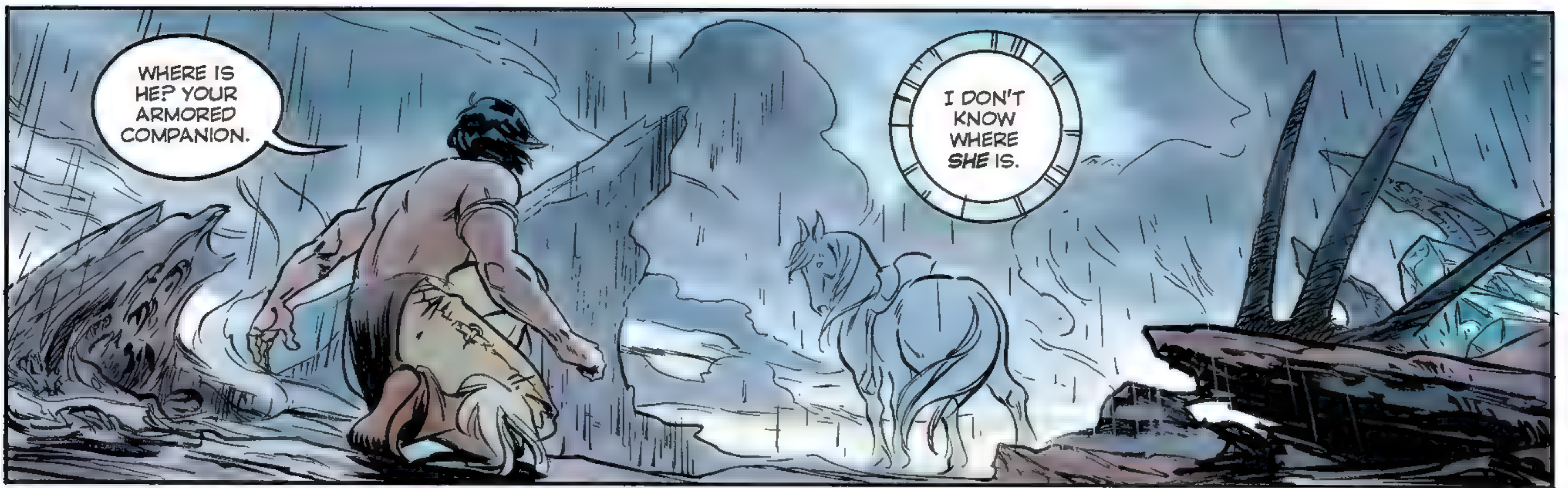


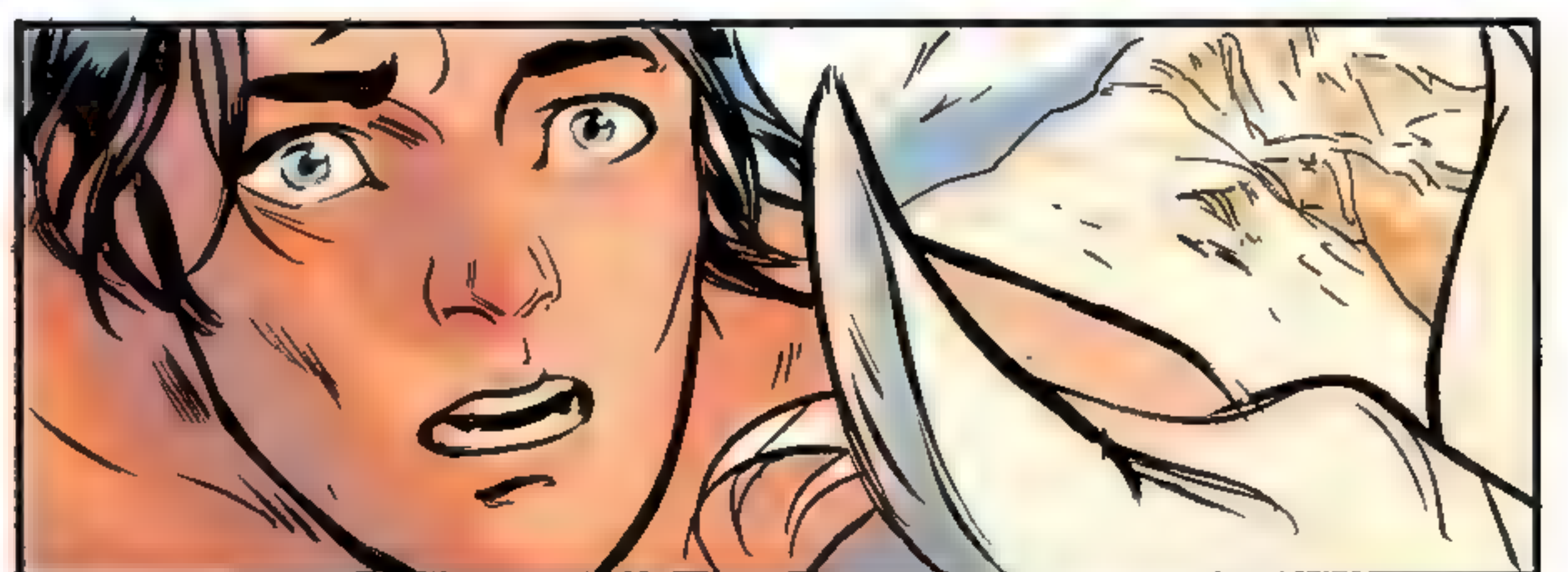
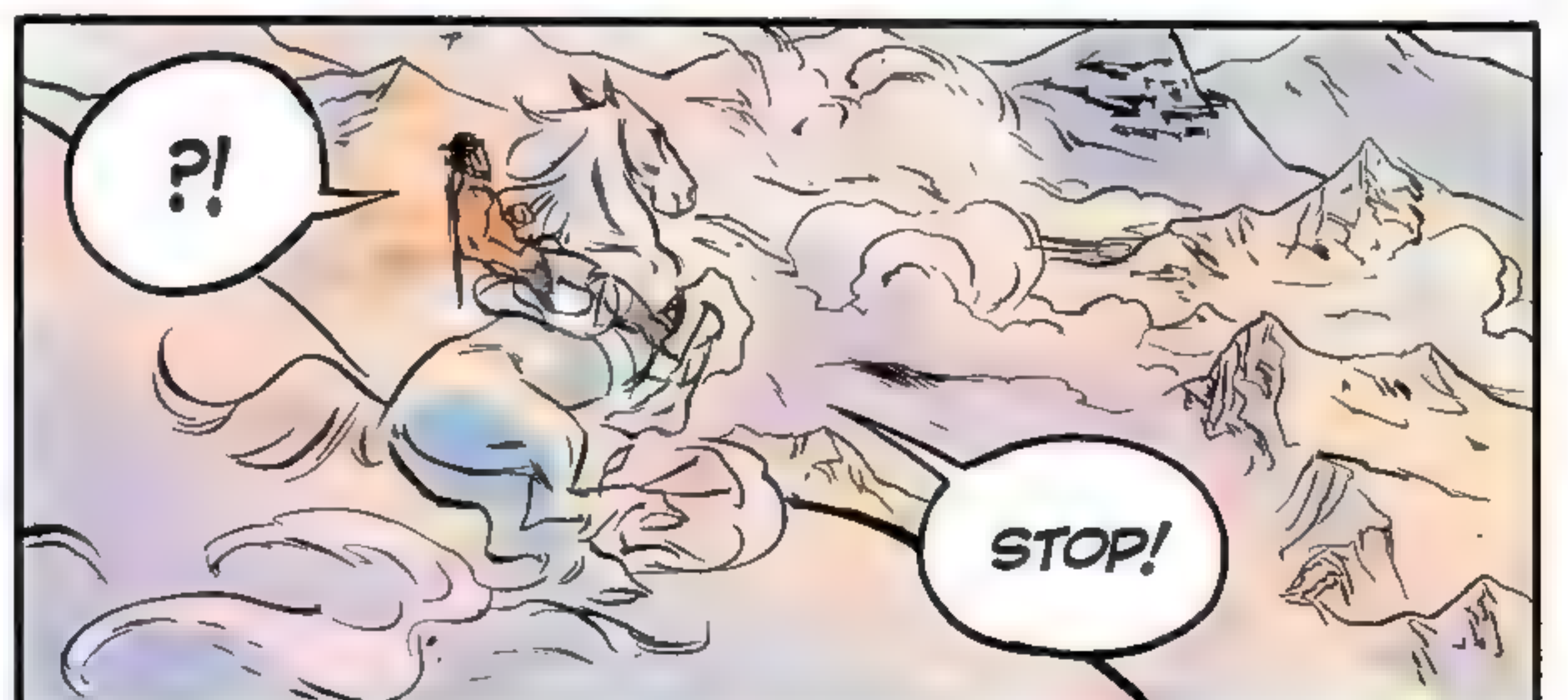
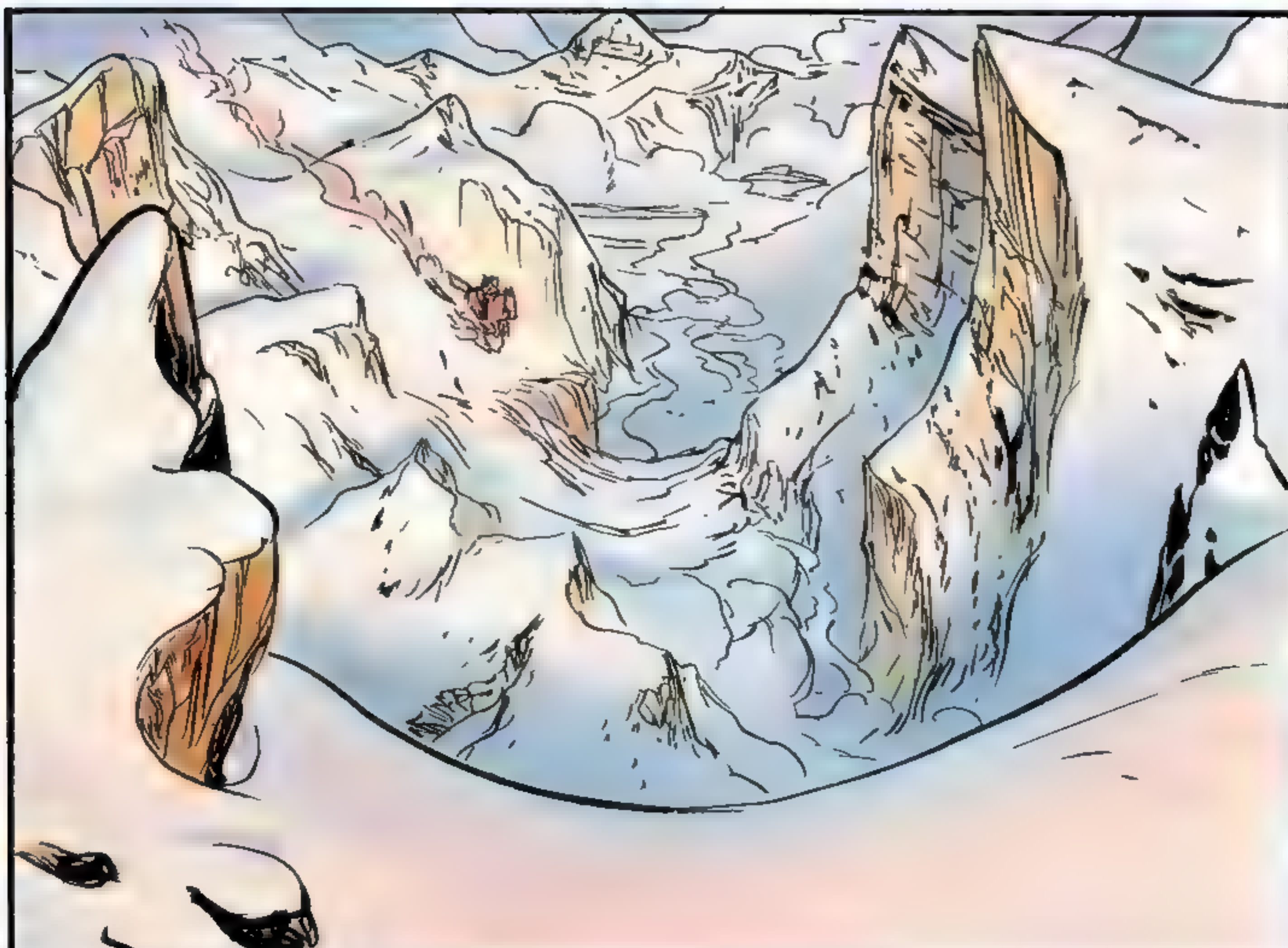
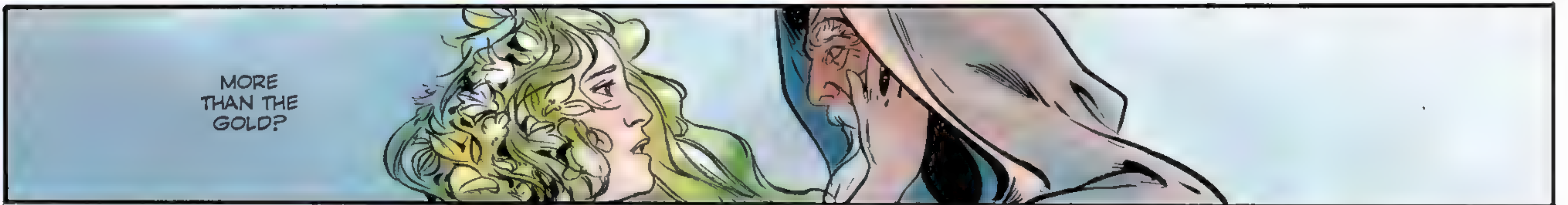
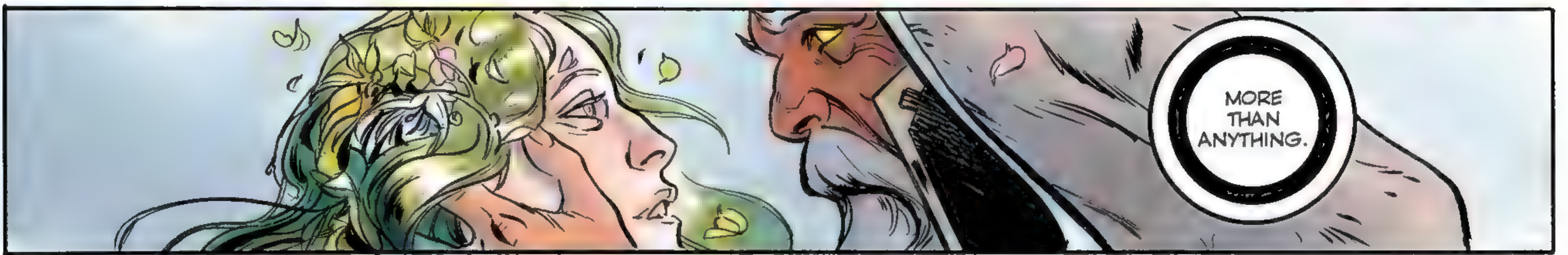
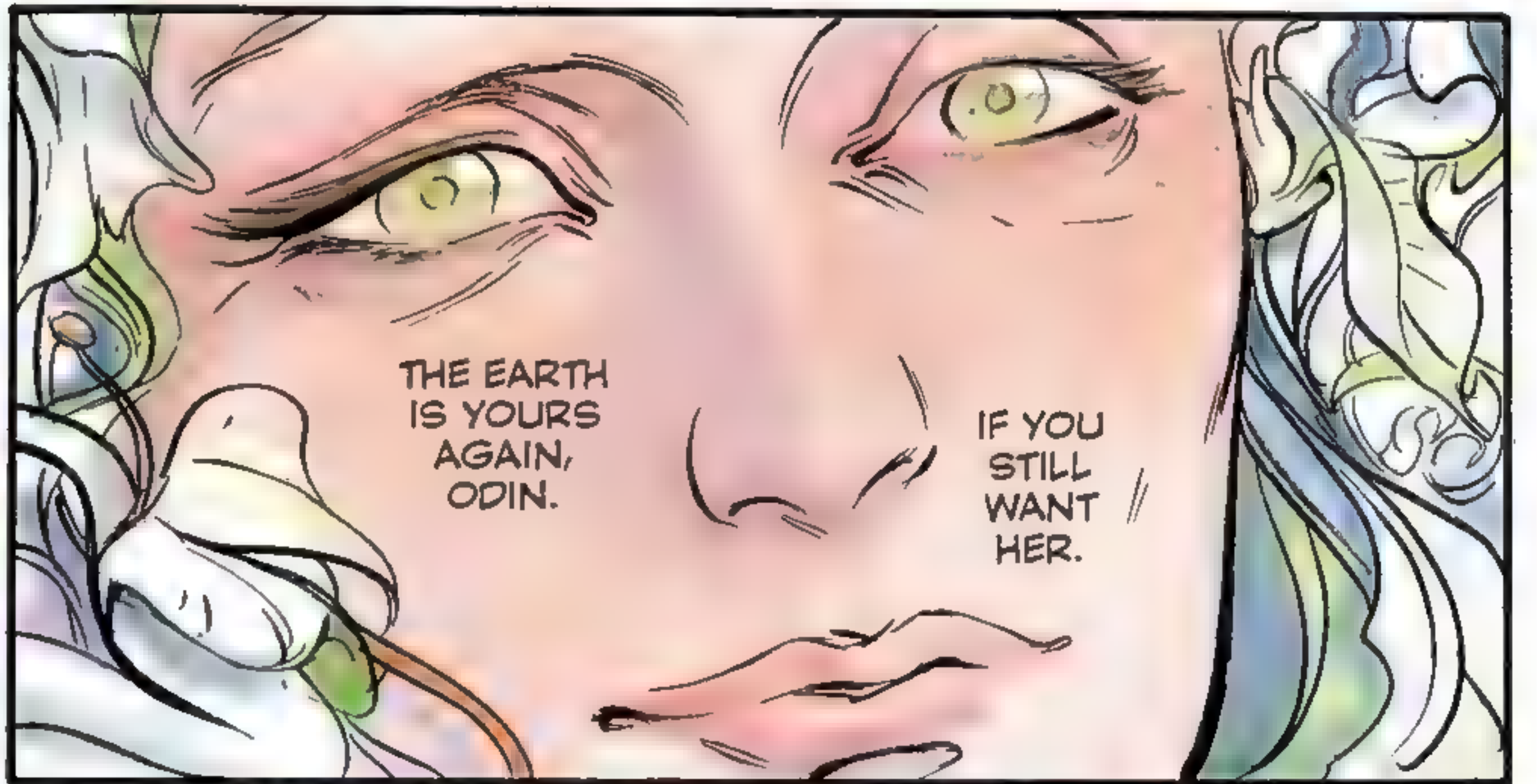
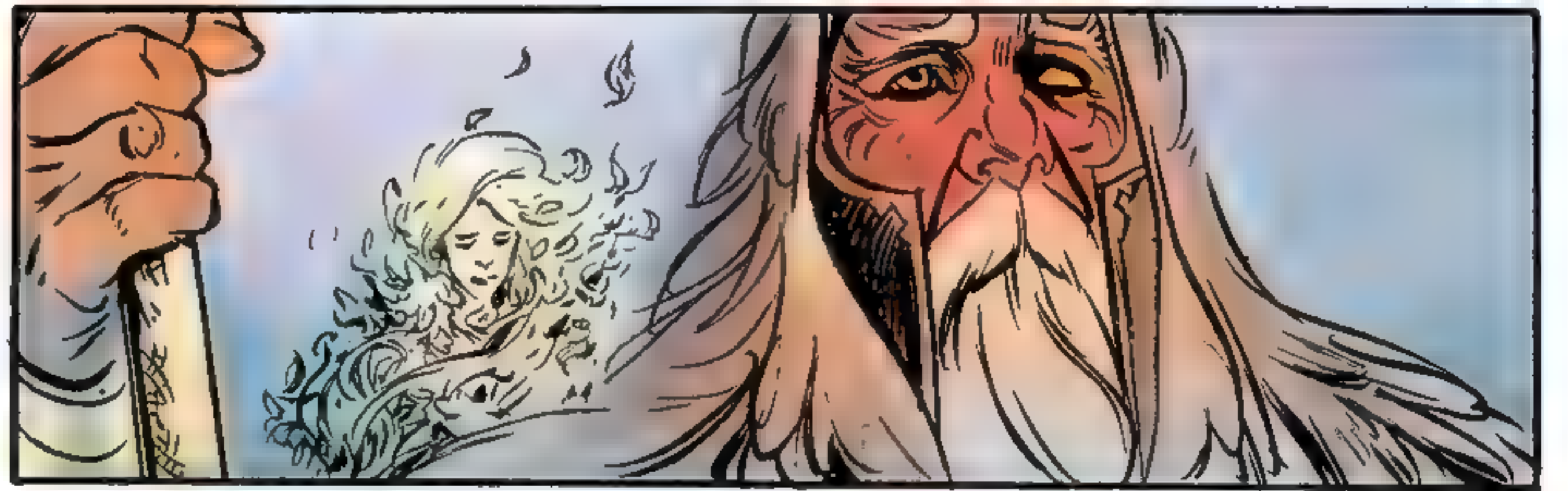
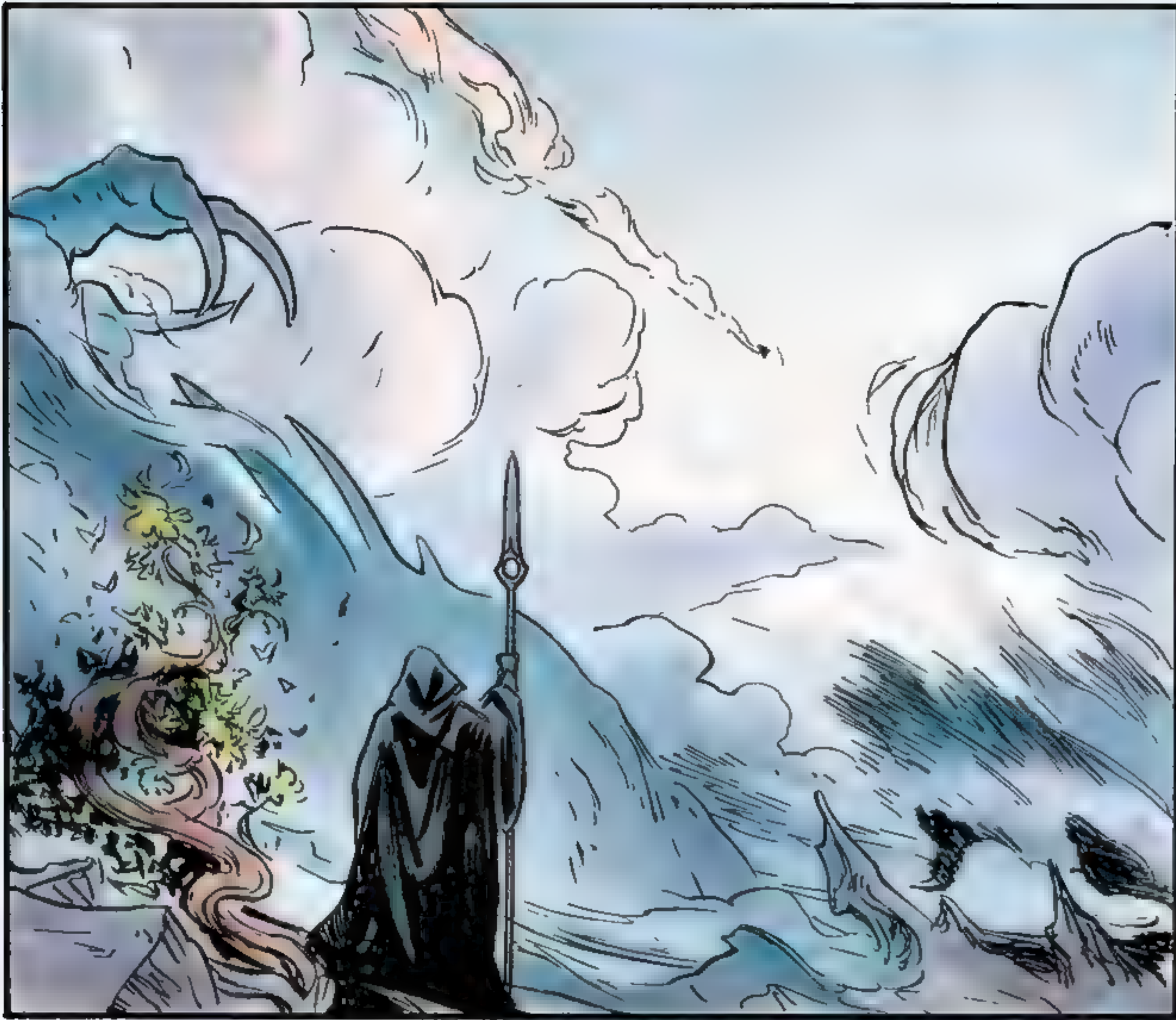
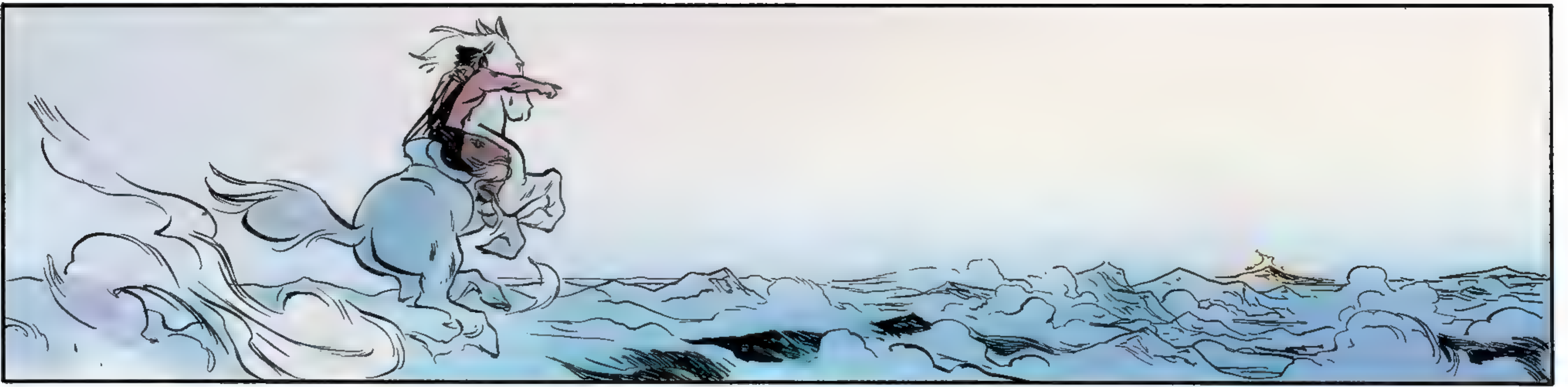
I'M
AFRAID!

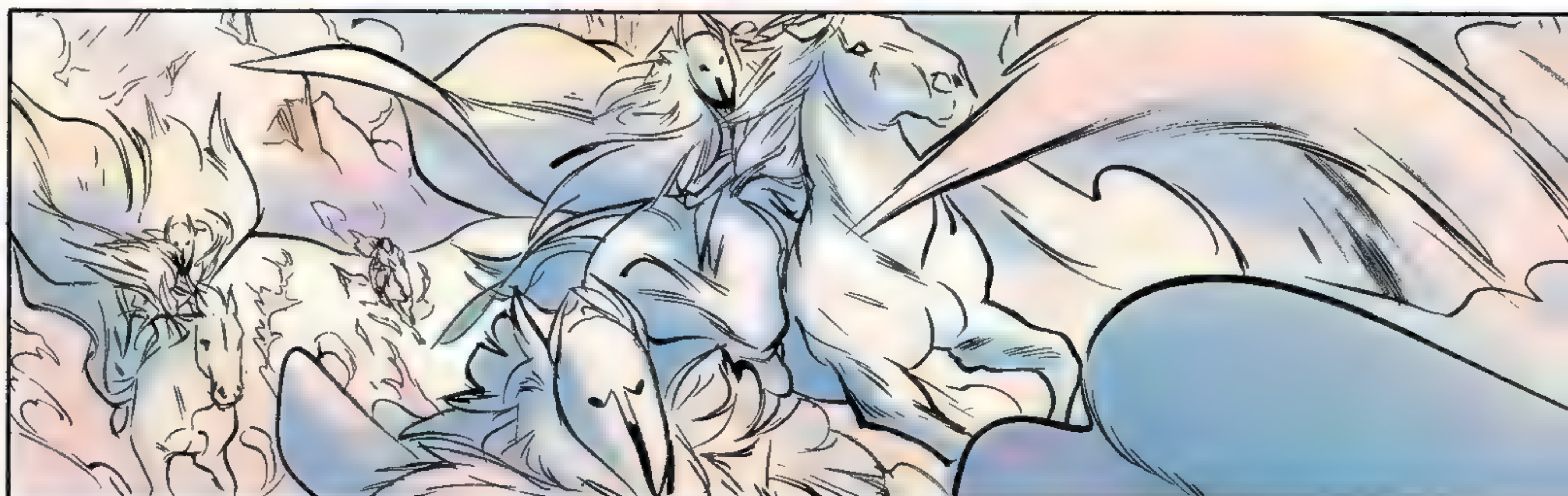
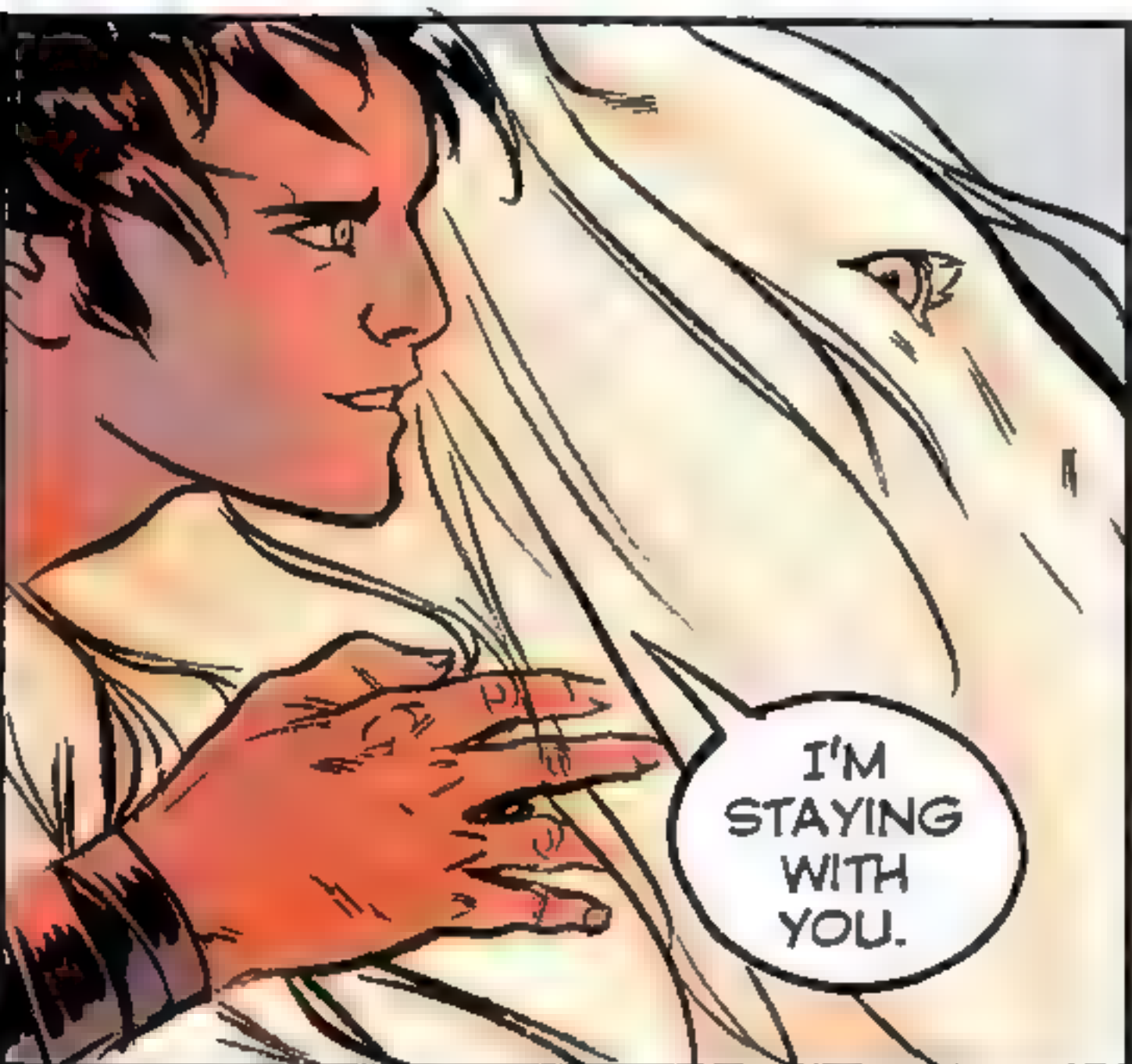
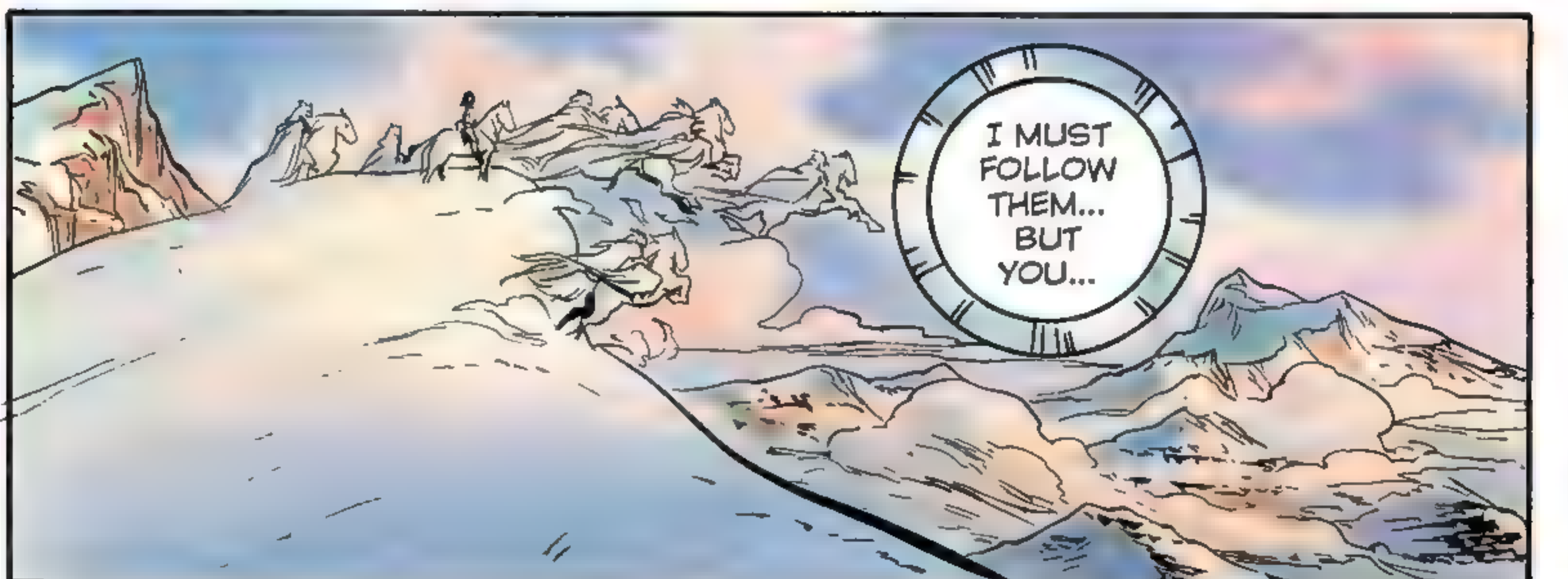
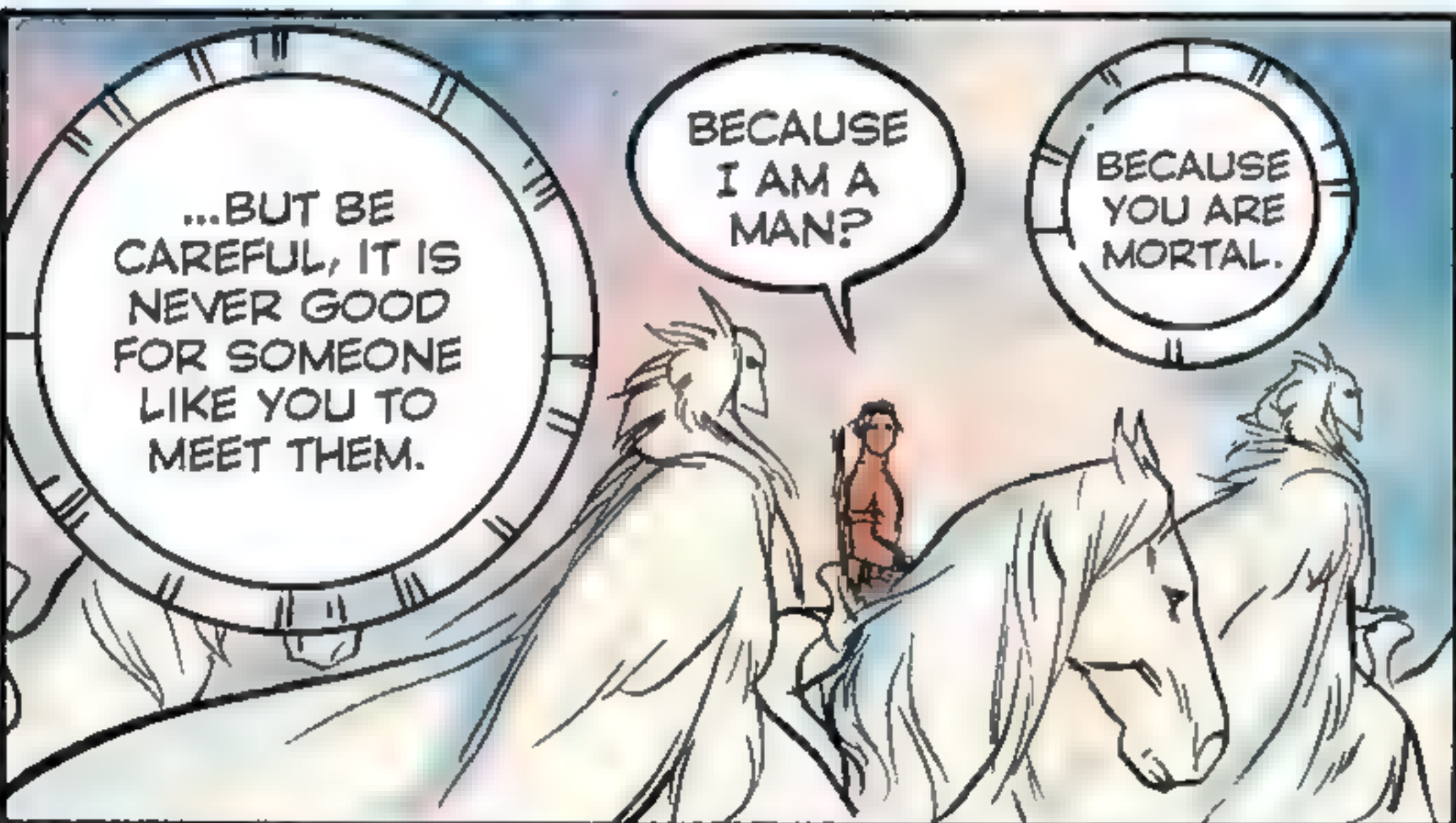
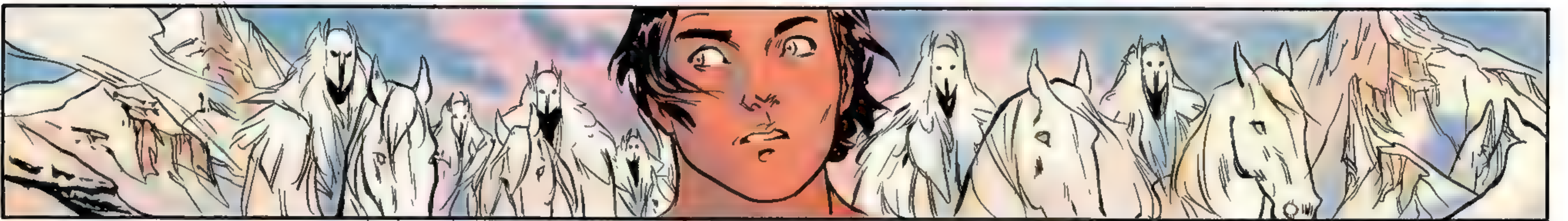
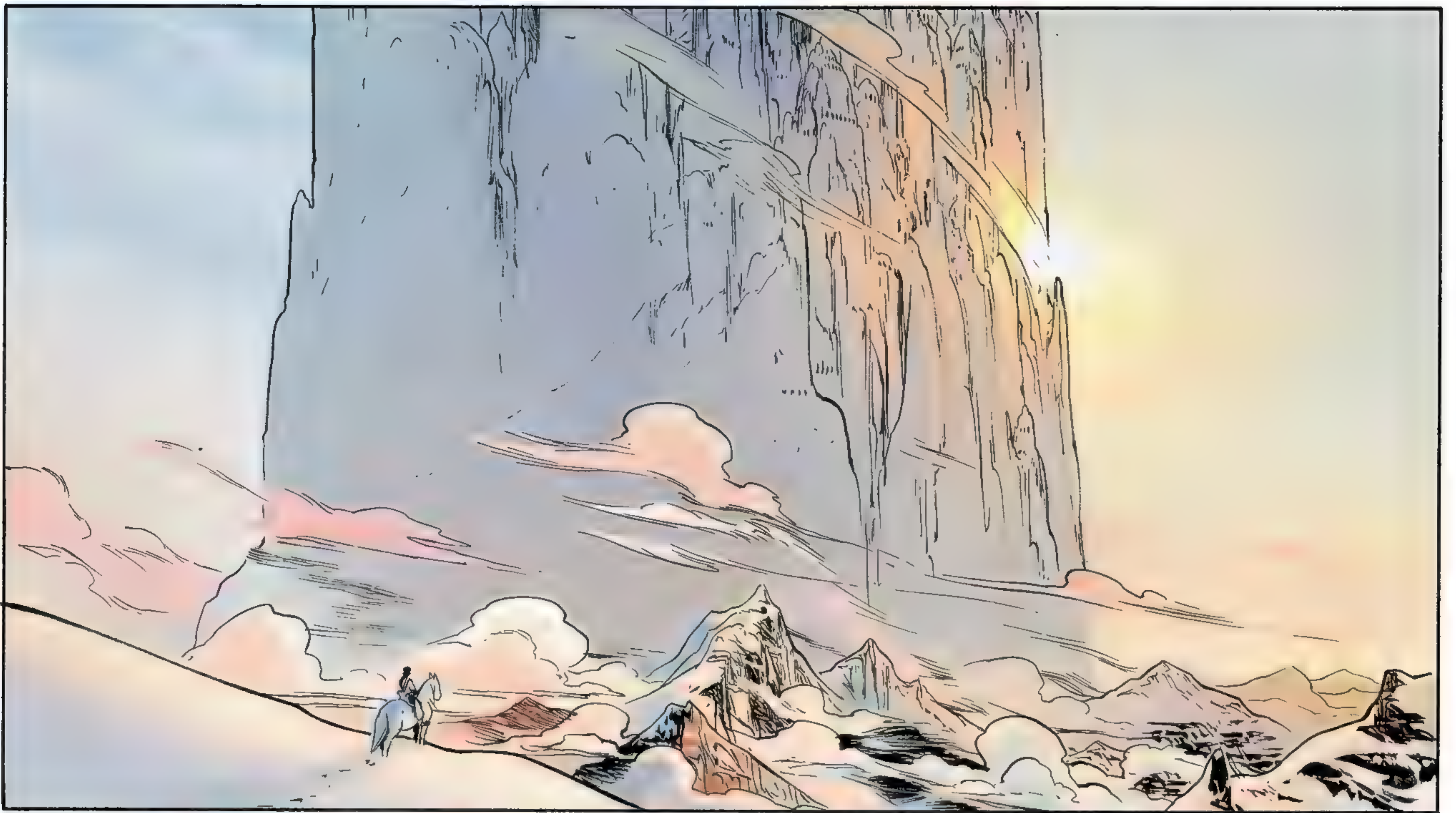


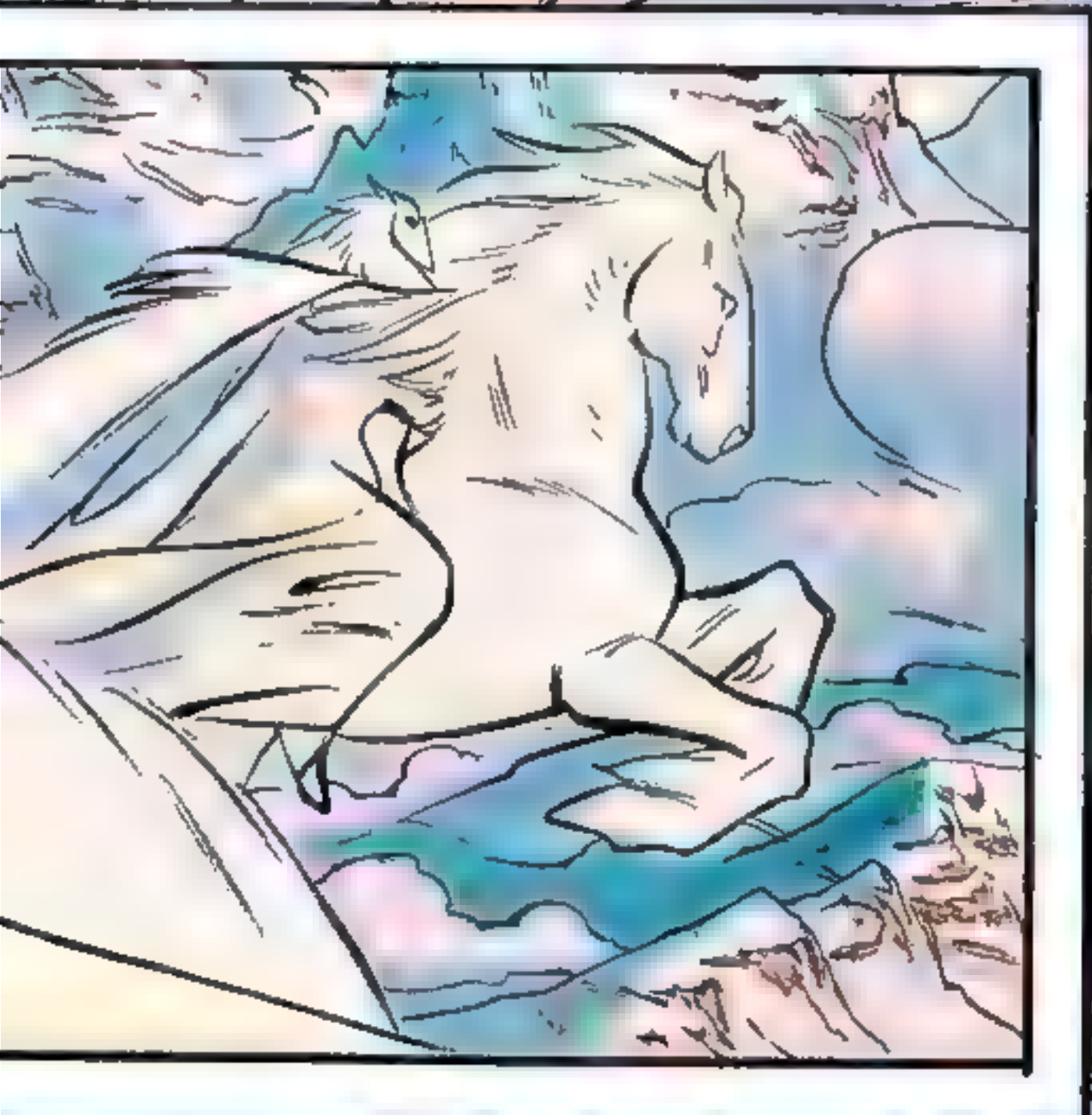
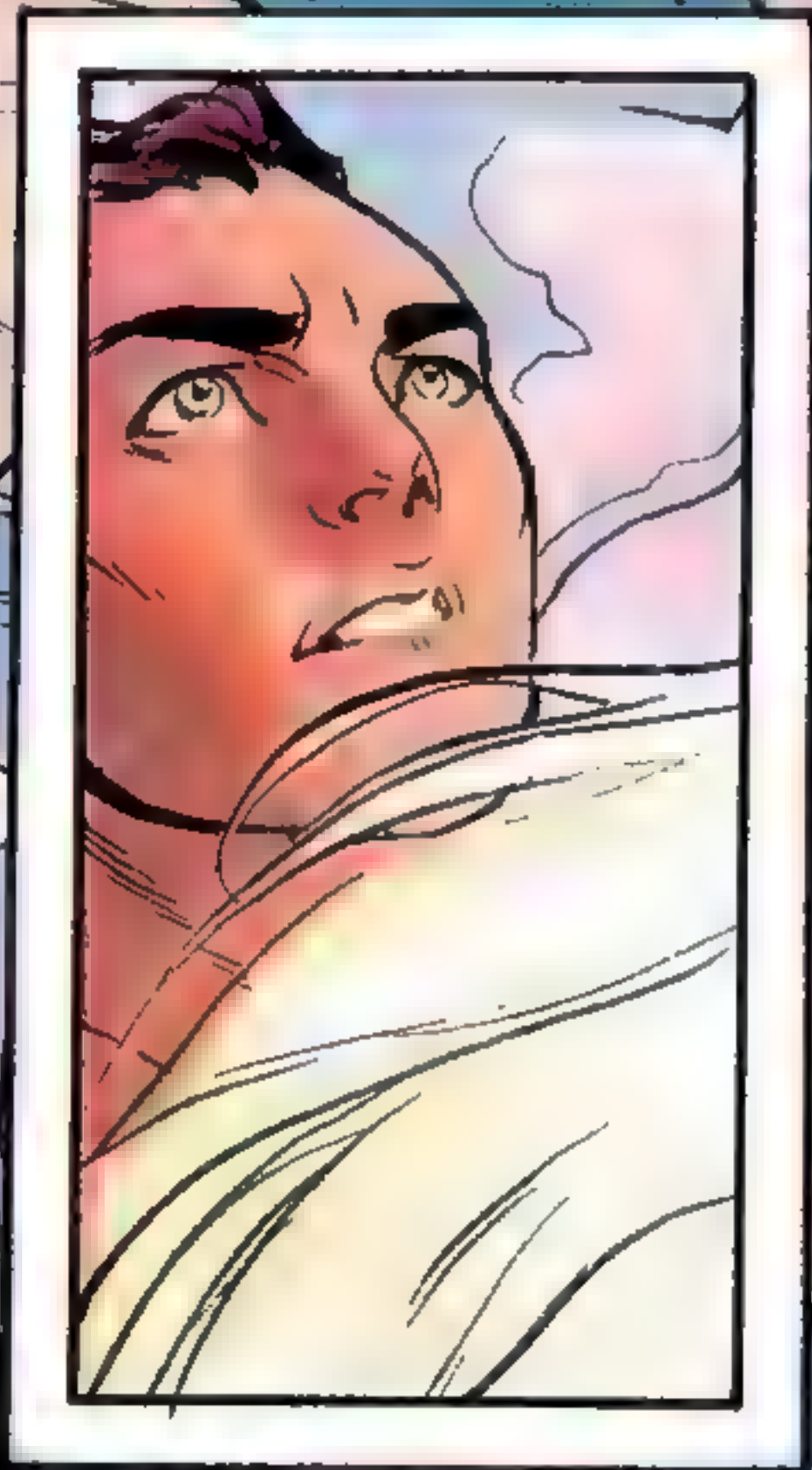
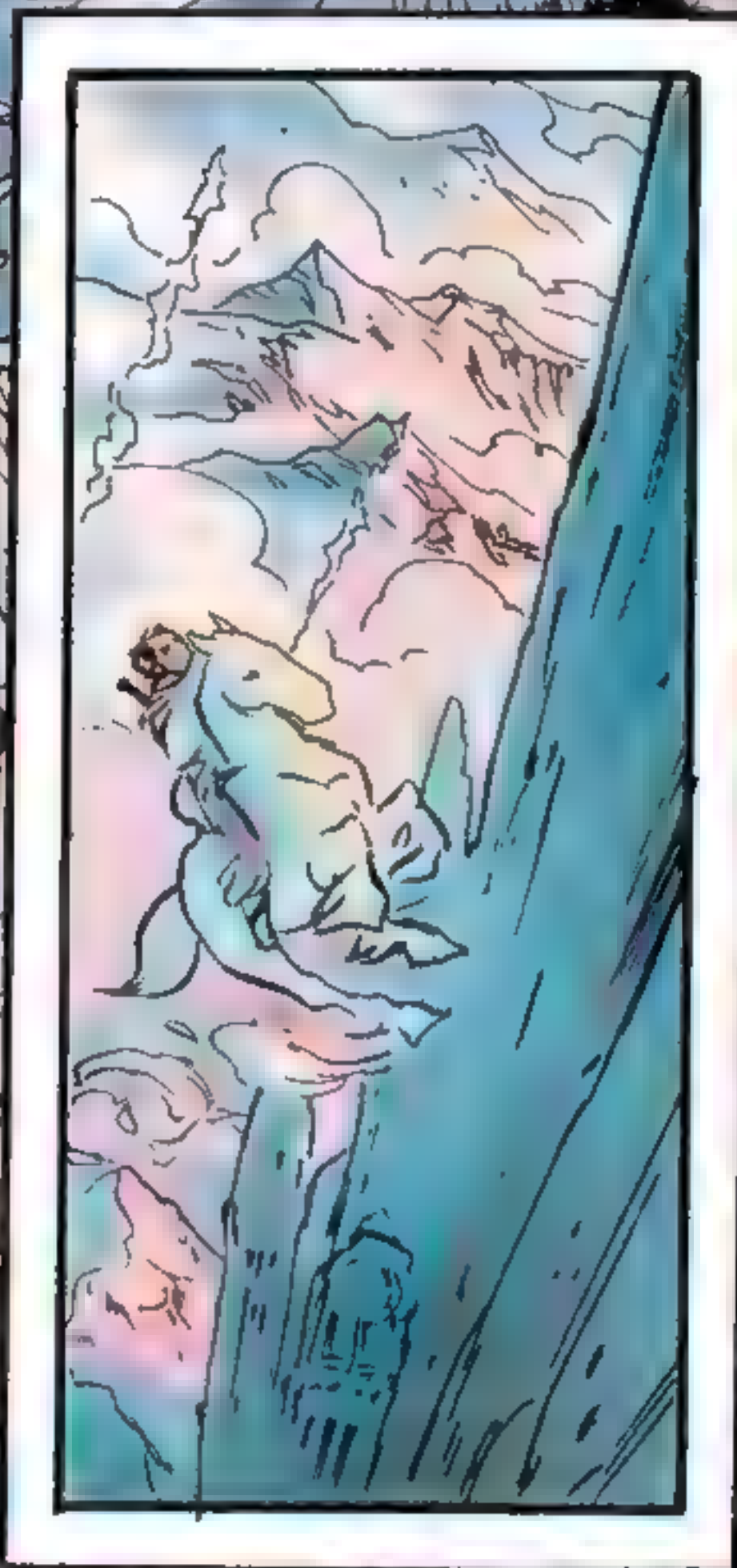
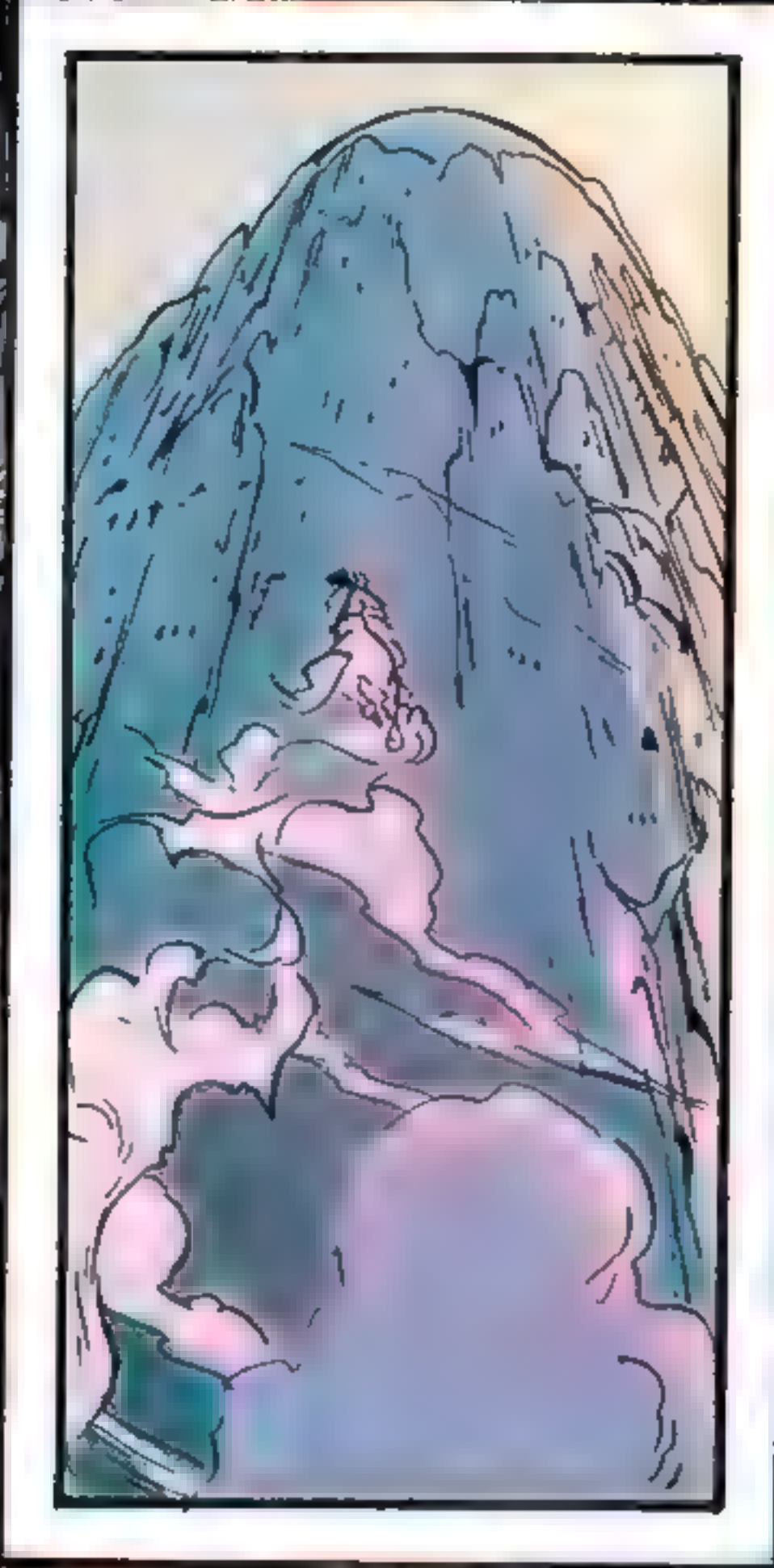
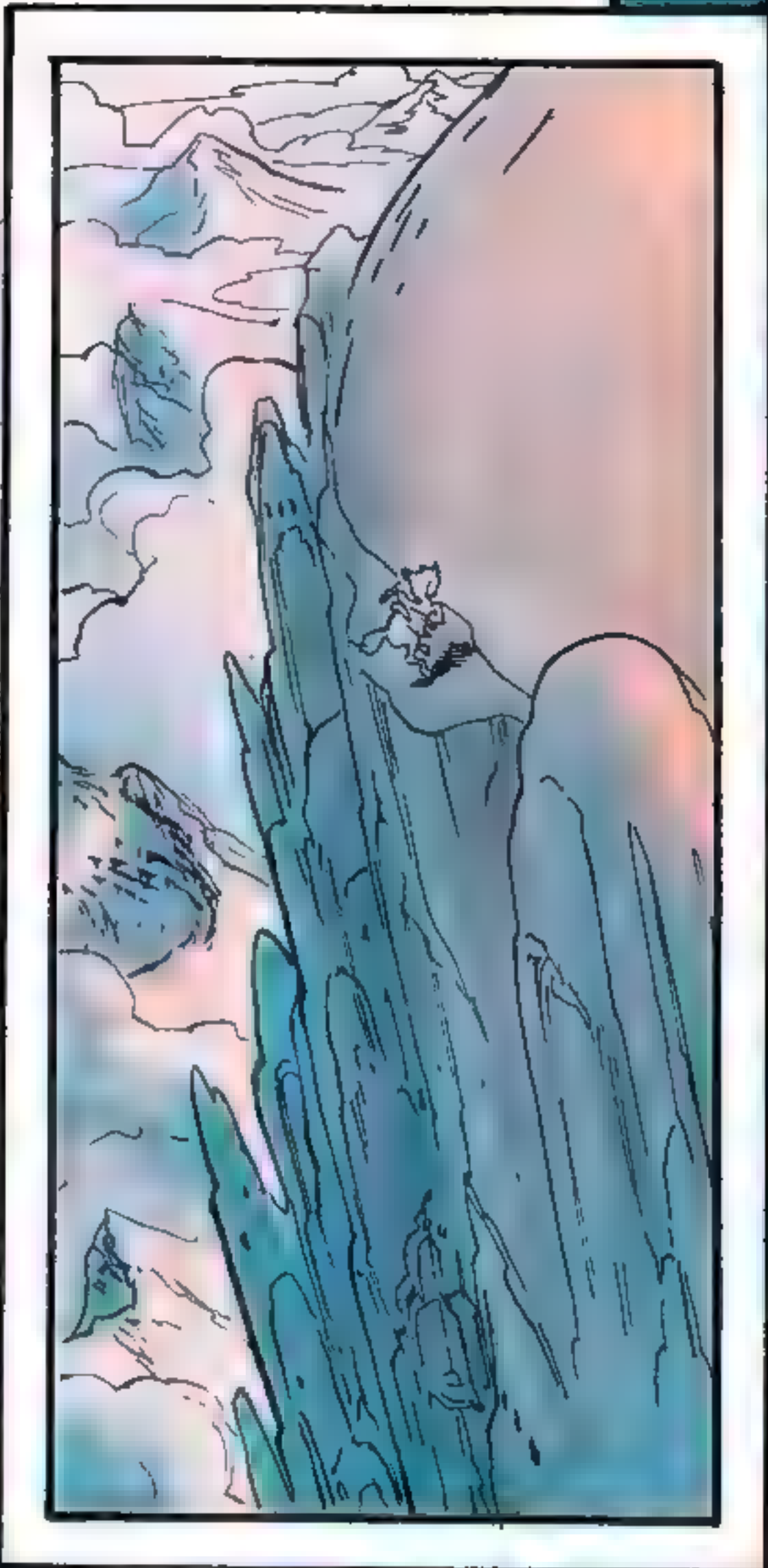


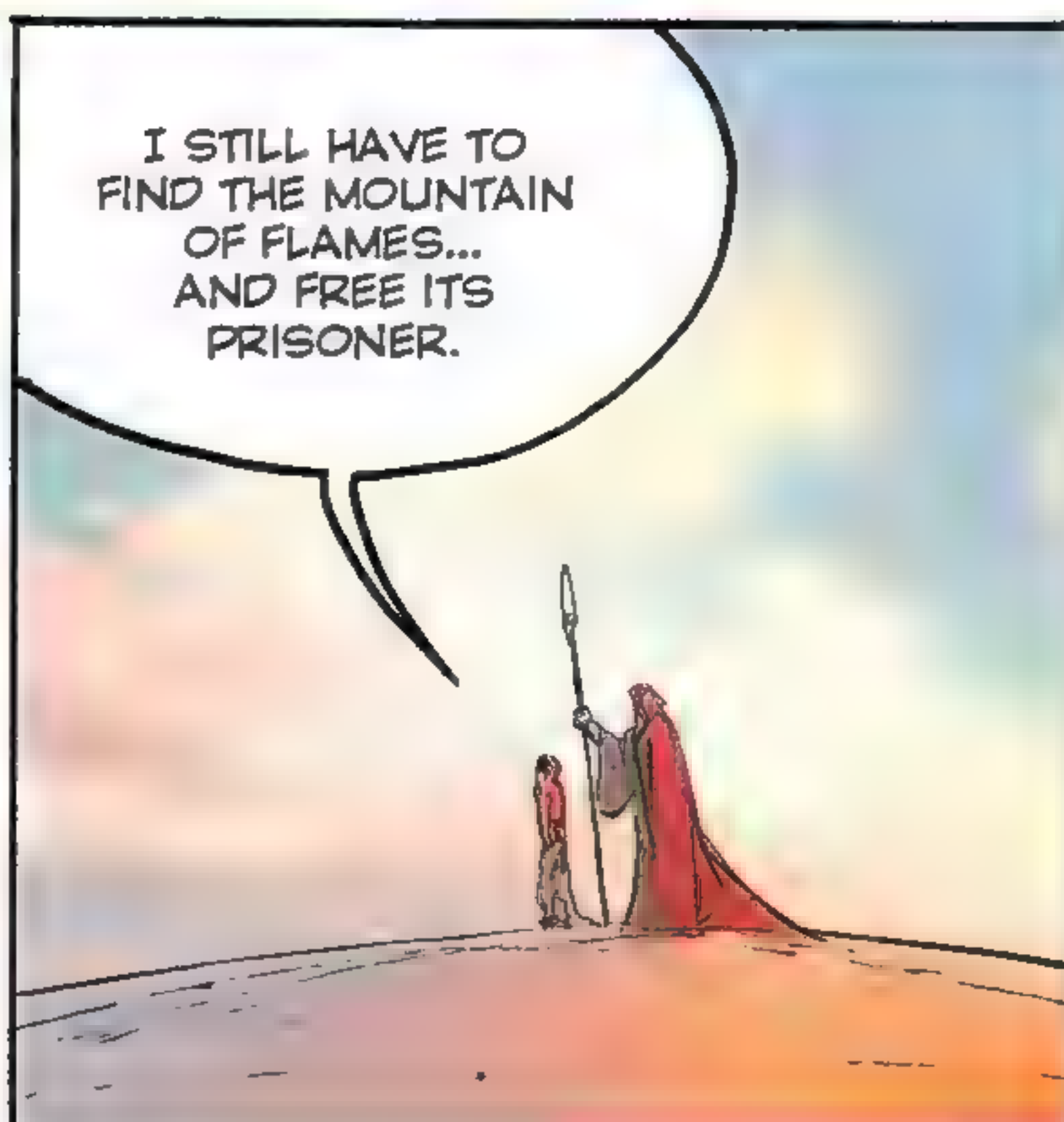
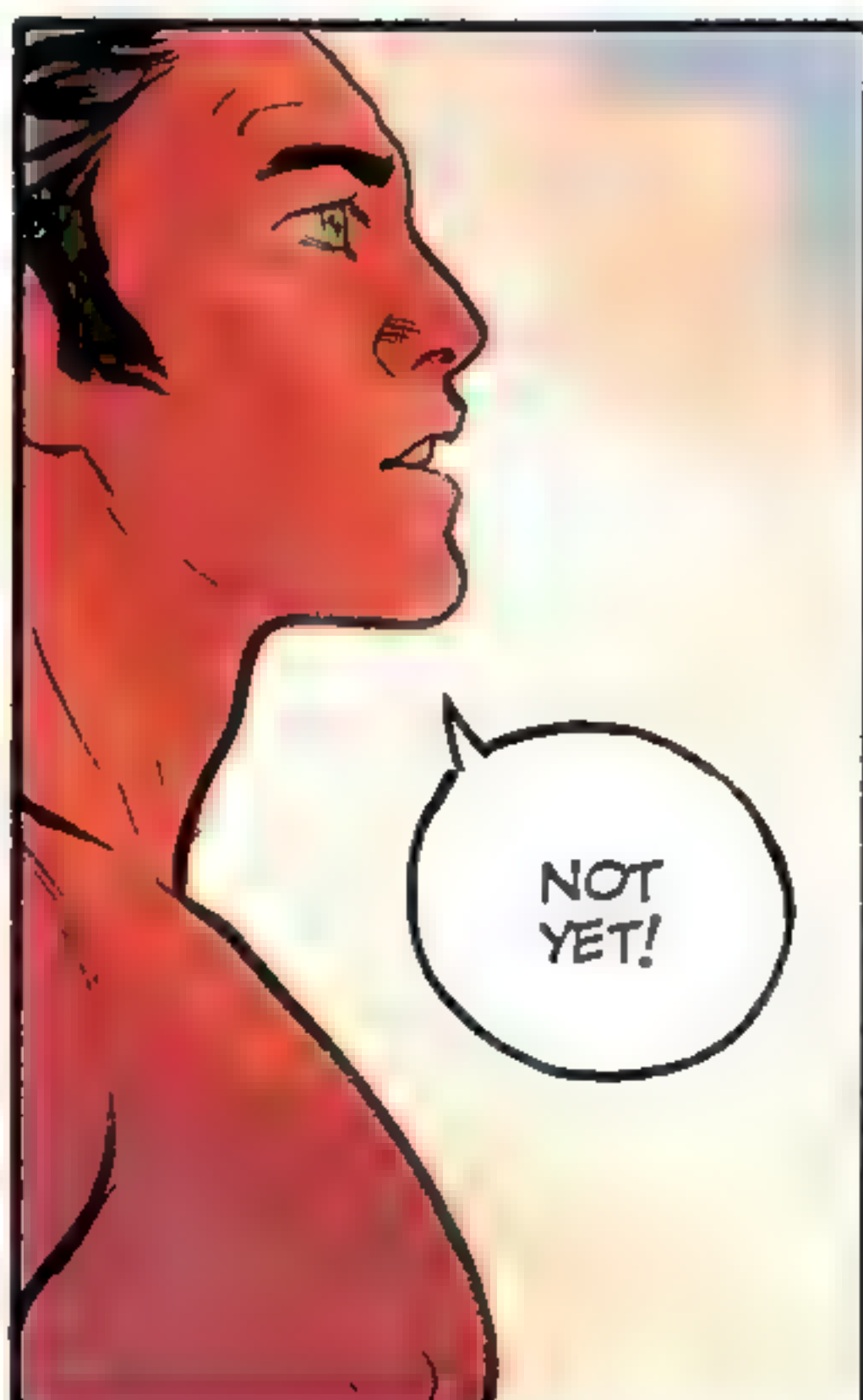
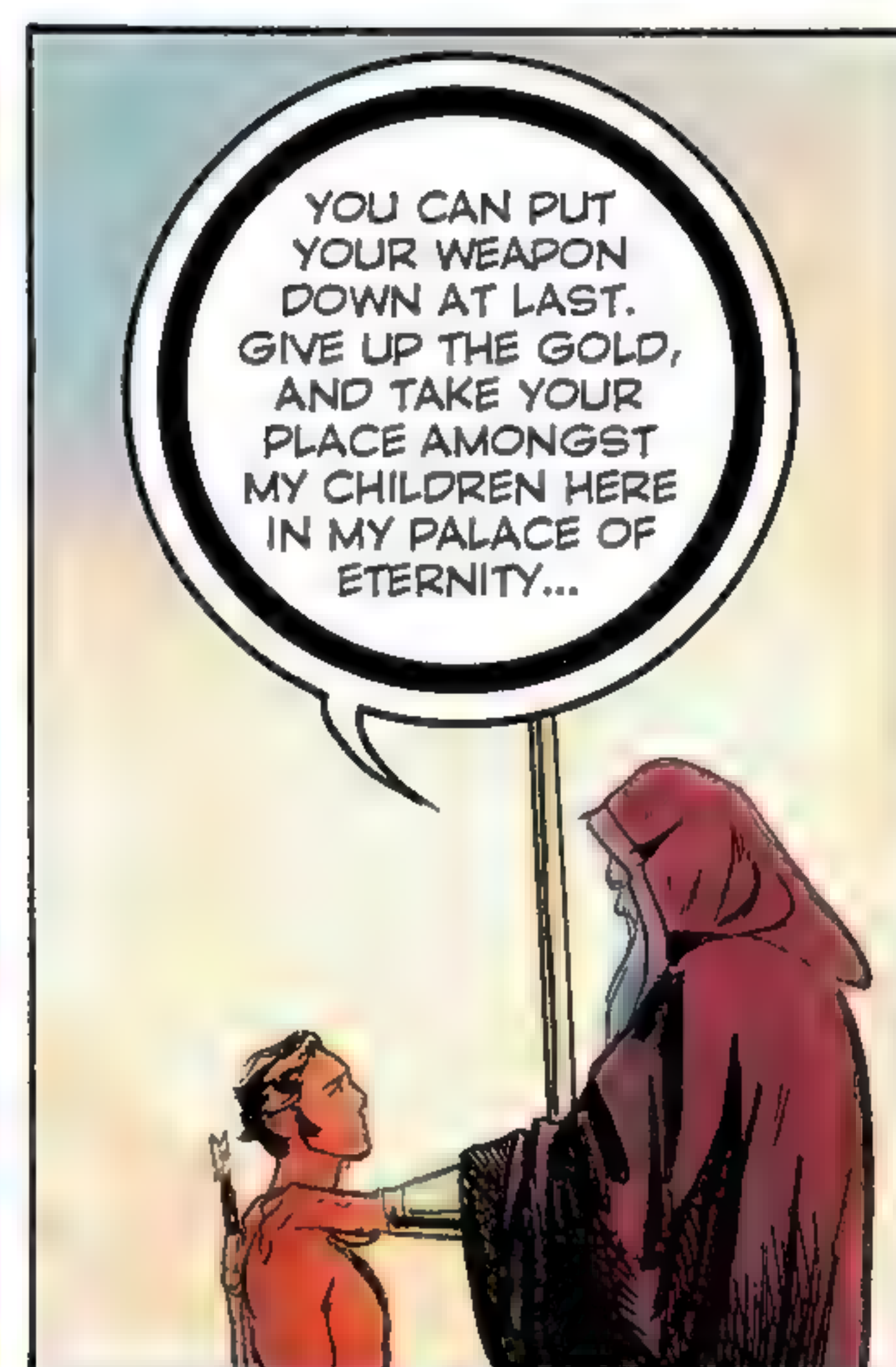
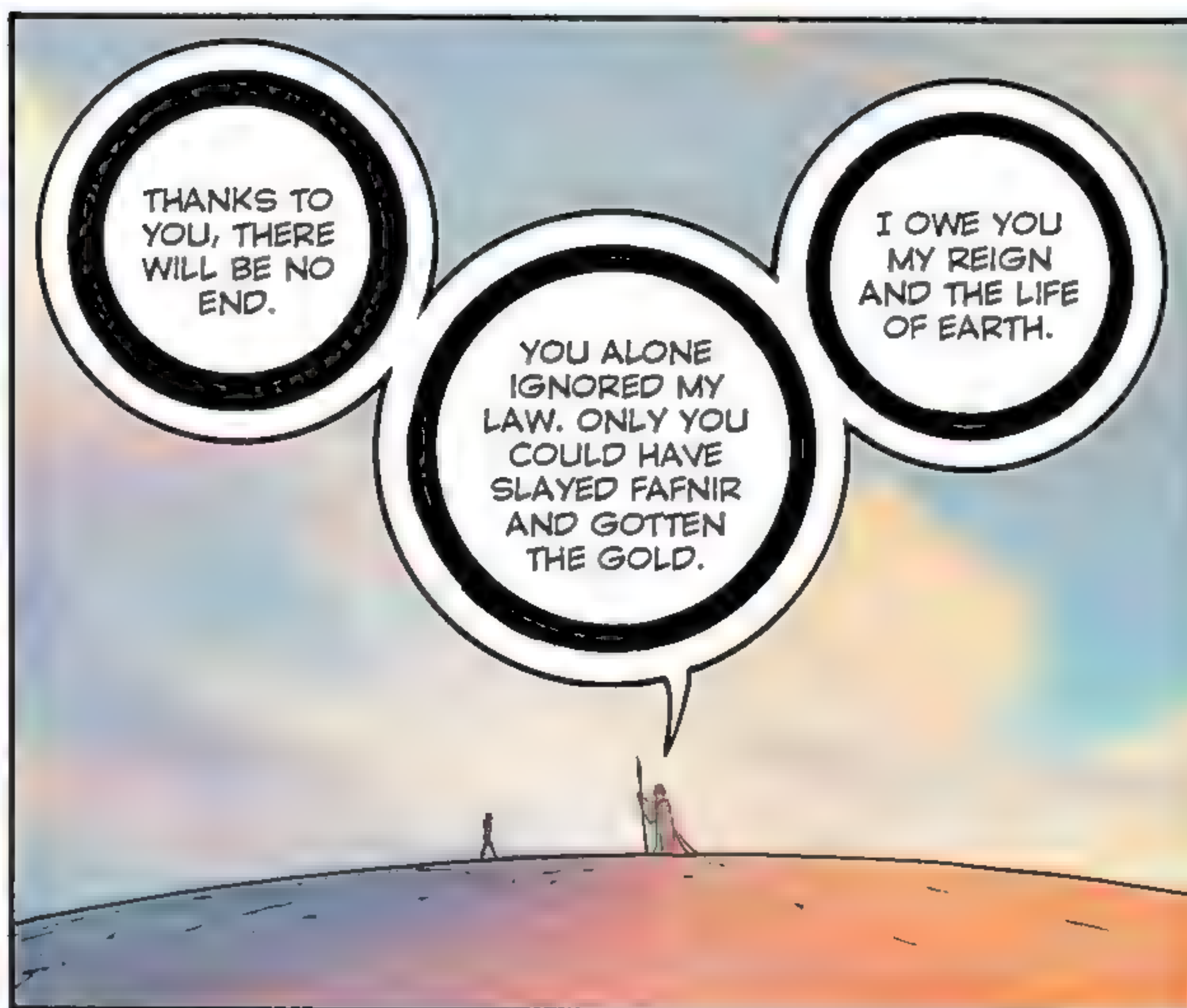
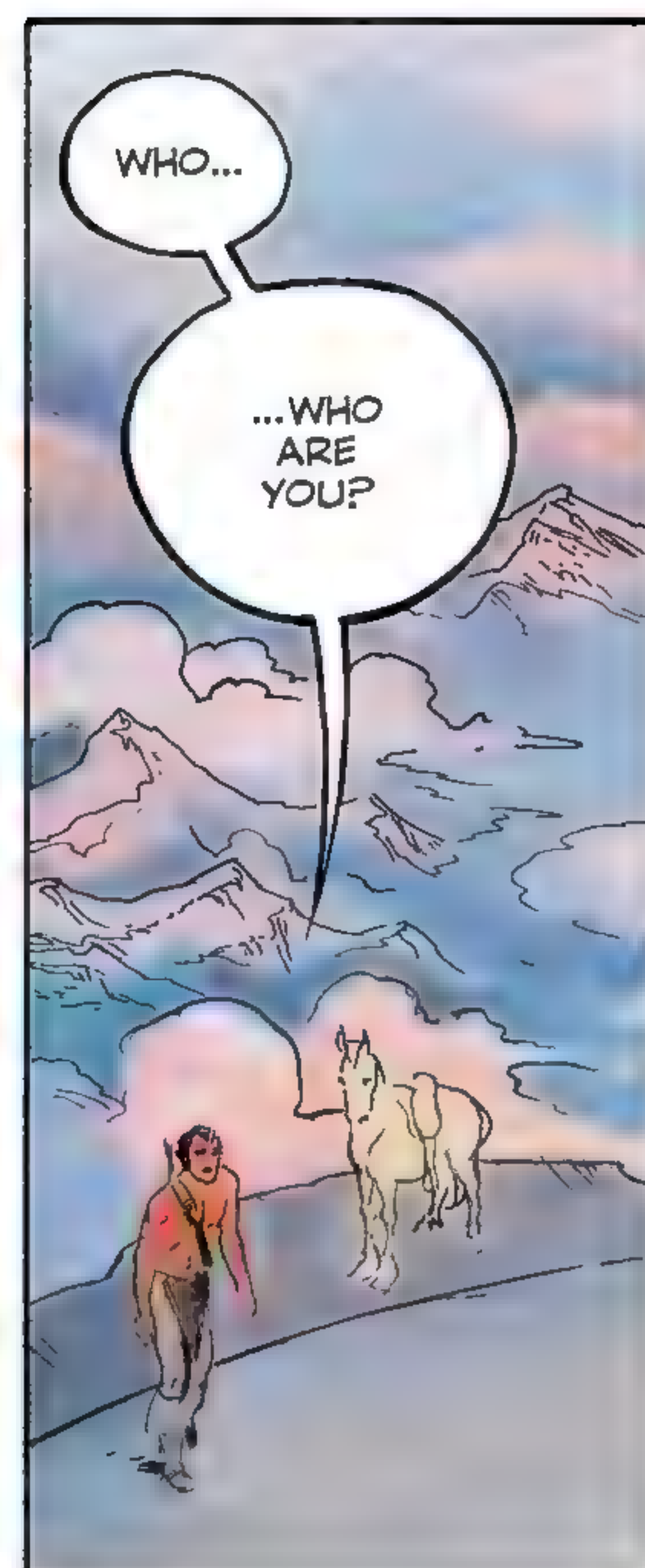
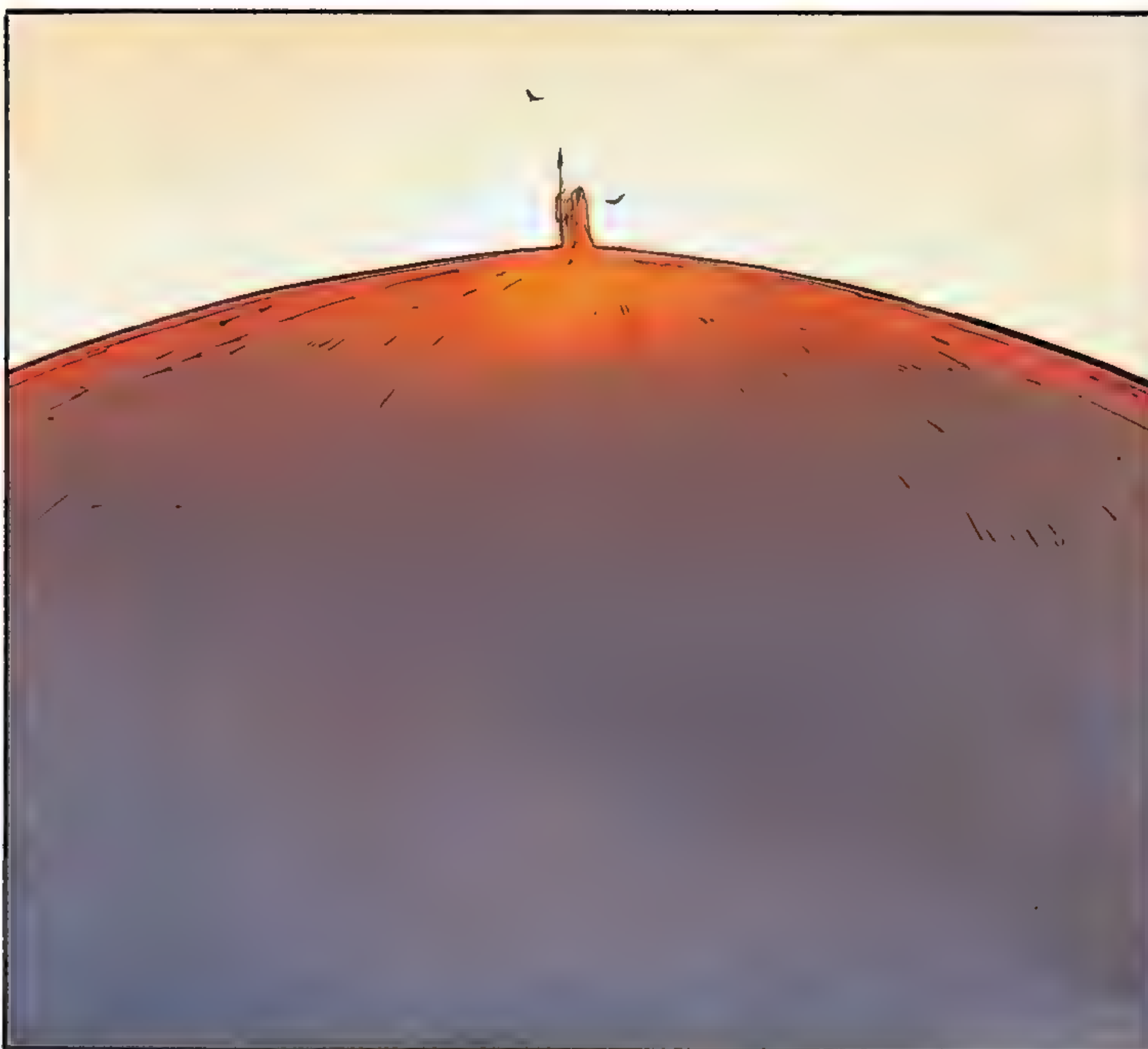
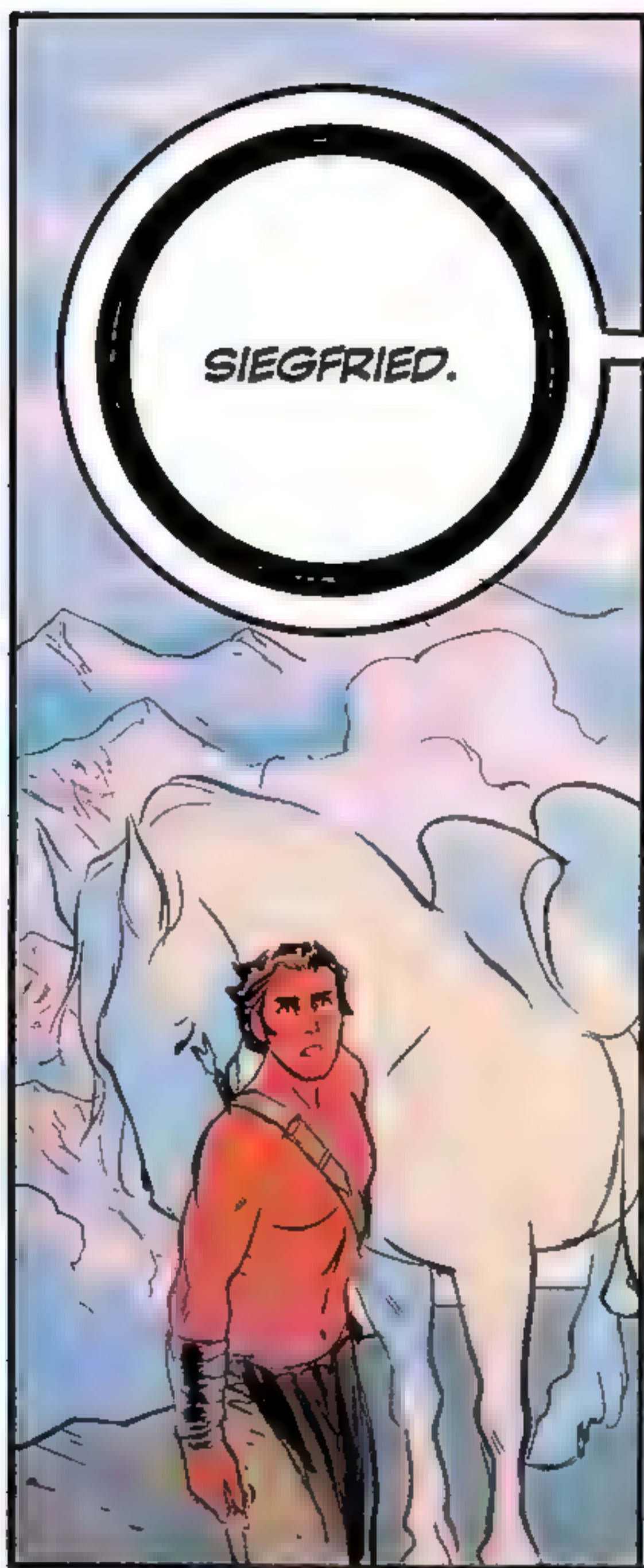


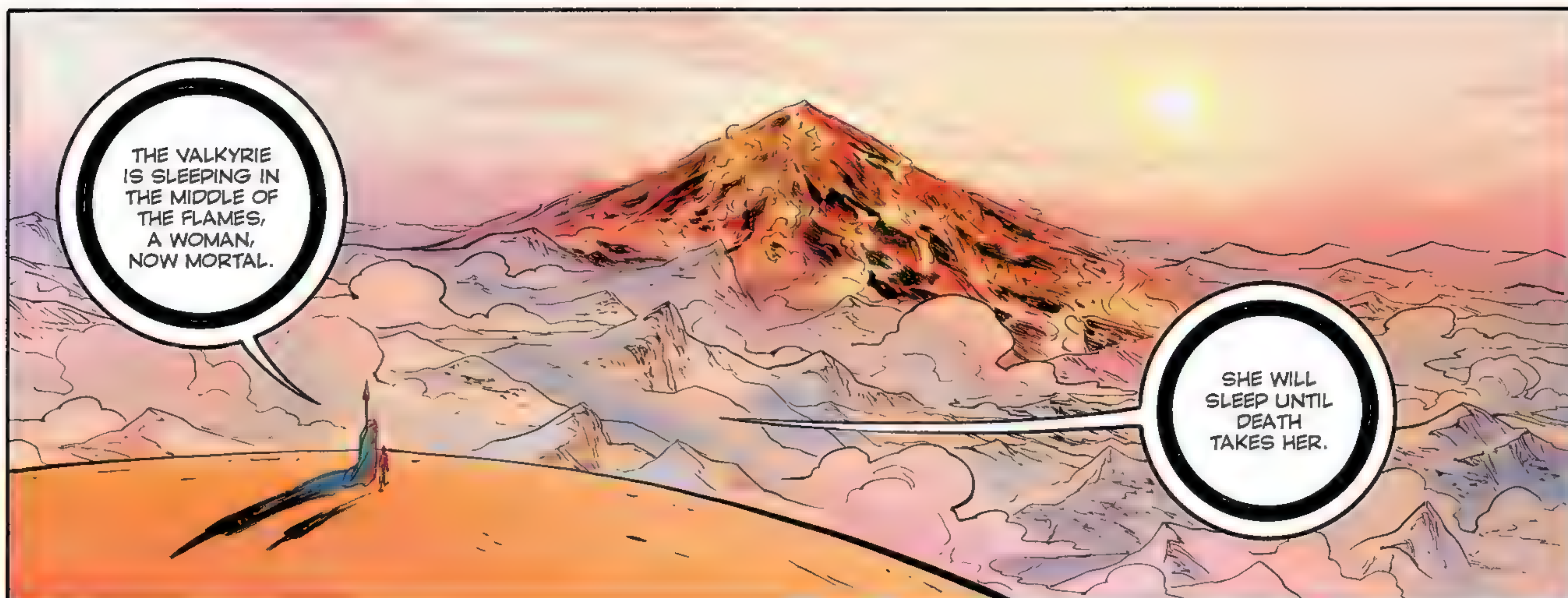






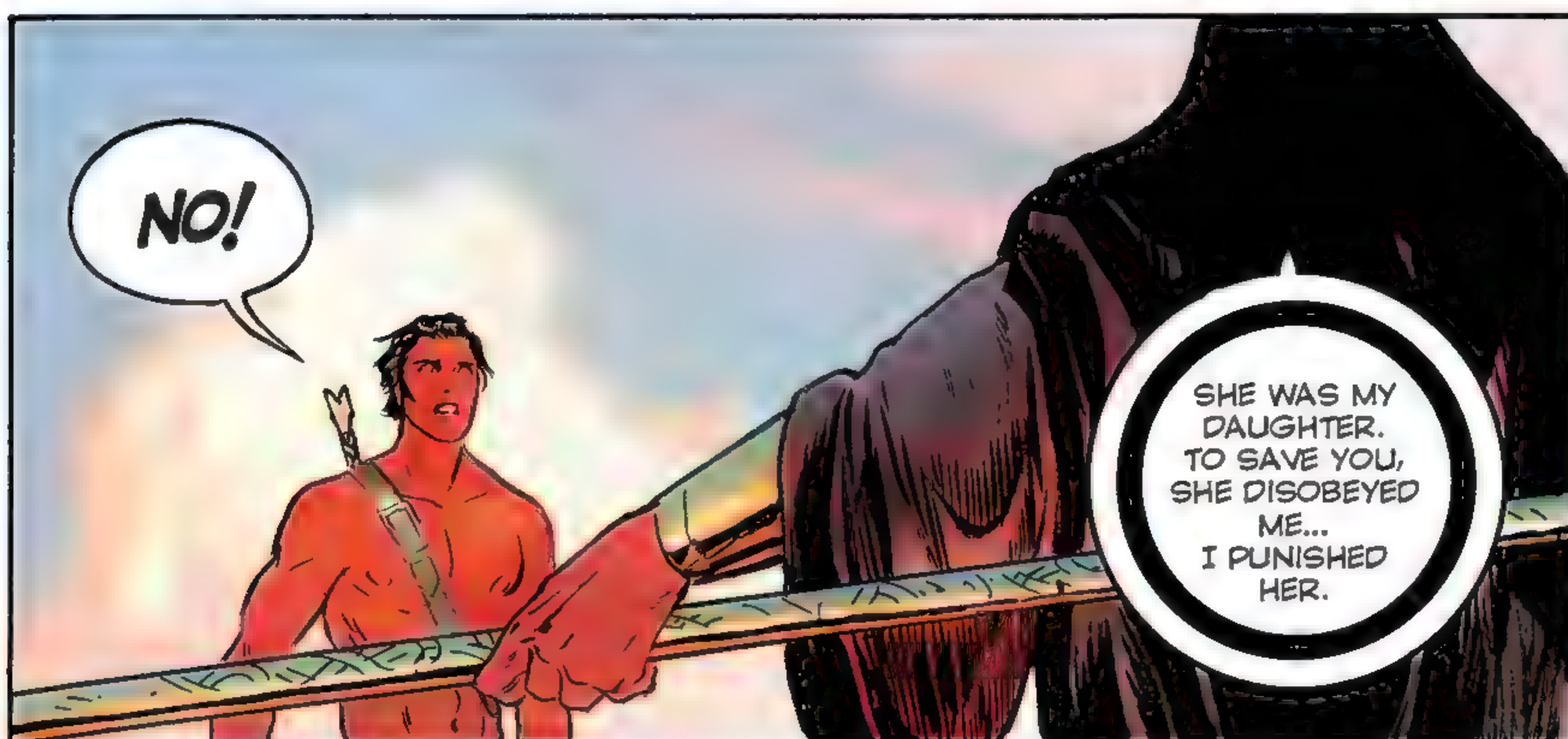






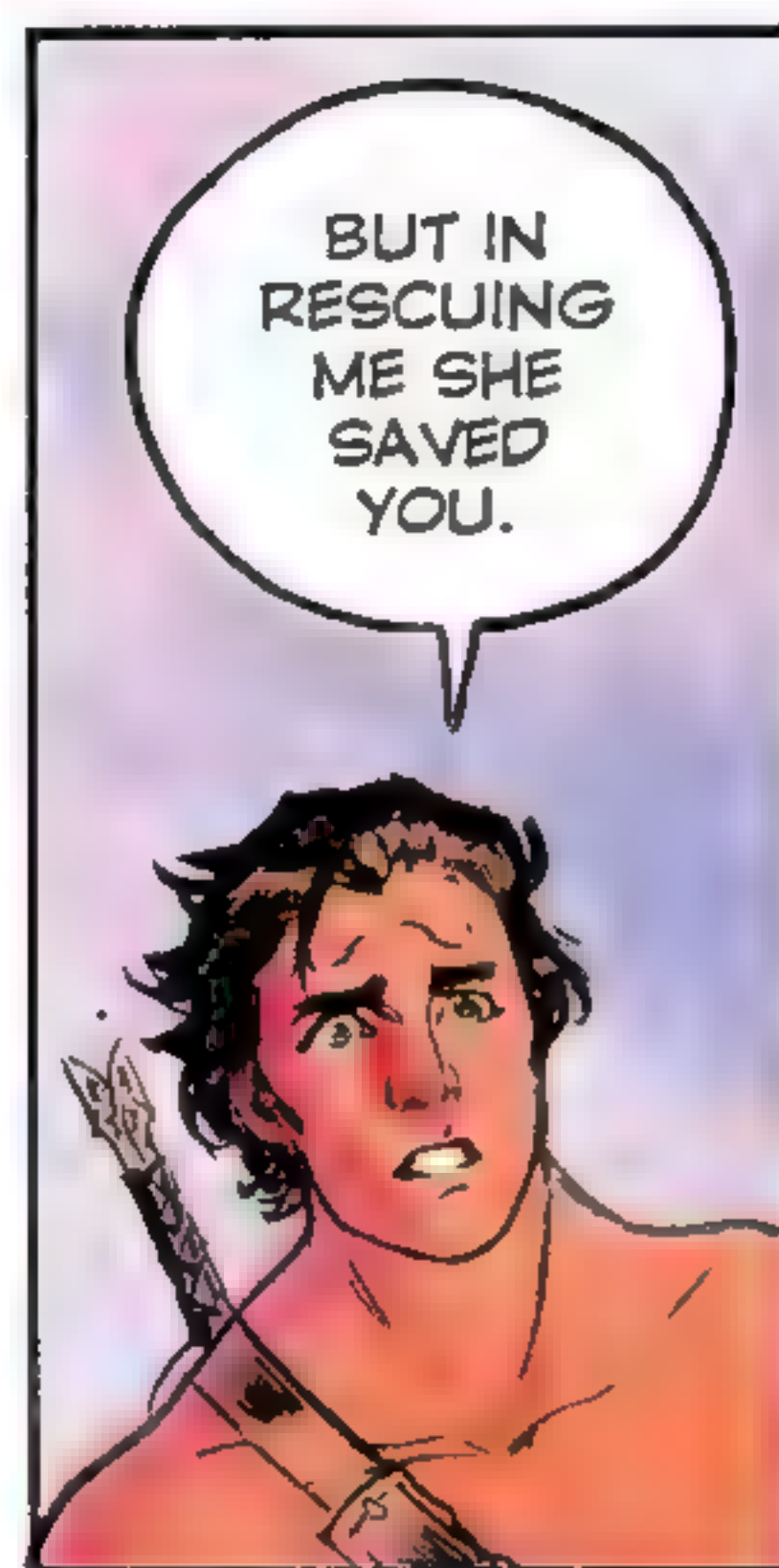
THE VALKYRIE
IS SLEEPING IN
THE MIDDLE OF
THE FLAMES,
A WOMAN,
NOW MORTAL.

SHE WILL
SLEEP UNTIL
DEATH
TAKES HER.



NO!

SHE WAS MY
DAUGHTER.
TO SAVE YOU,
SHE DISOBEYED
ME...
I PUNISHED
HER.



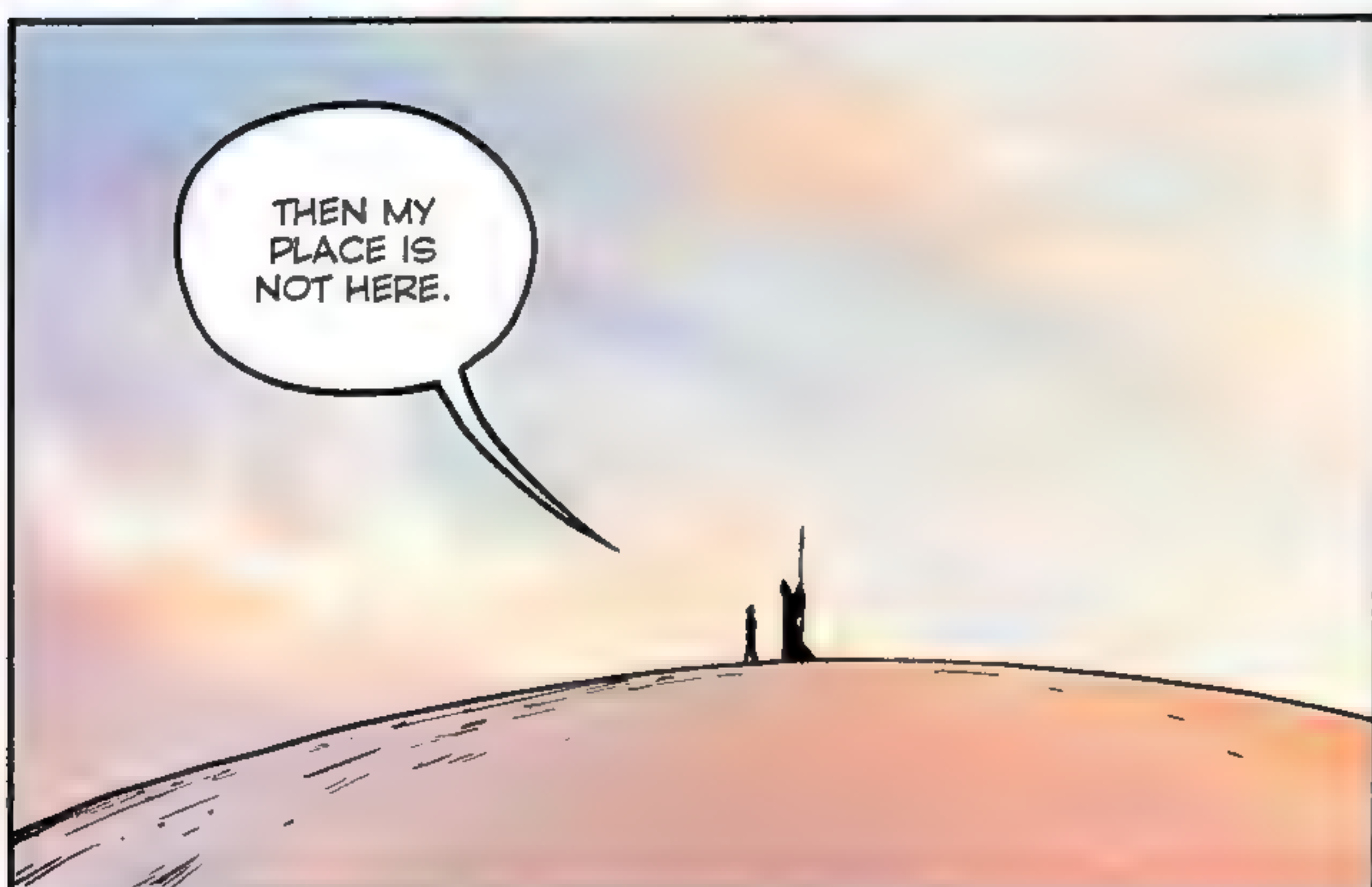
BUT IN
RESCUING
ME SHE
SAVED
YOU.



CONTEMPLATE
GUNGNIR...
IT IS THE
AXEL AND THE
WORLD IS THE
WHEEL.

THOSE
RUNES ARE
MY WORD,
AND THE
LAW OF THE
UNIVERSE.

IF YOU WANT
TO TAKE
YOUR PLACE
BY MY SIDE,
YOU MUST
SUBMIT.



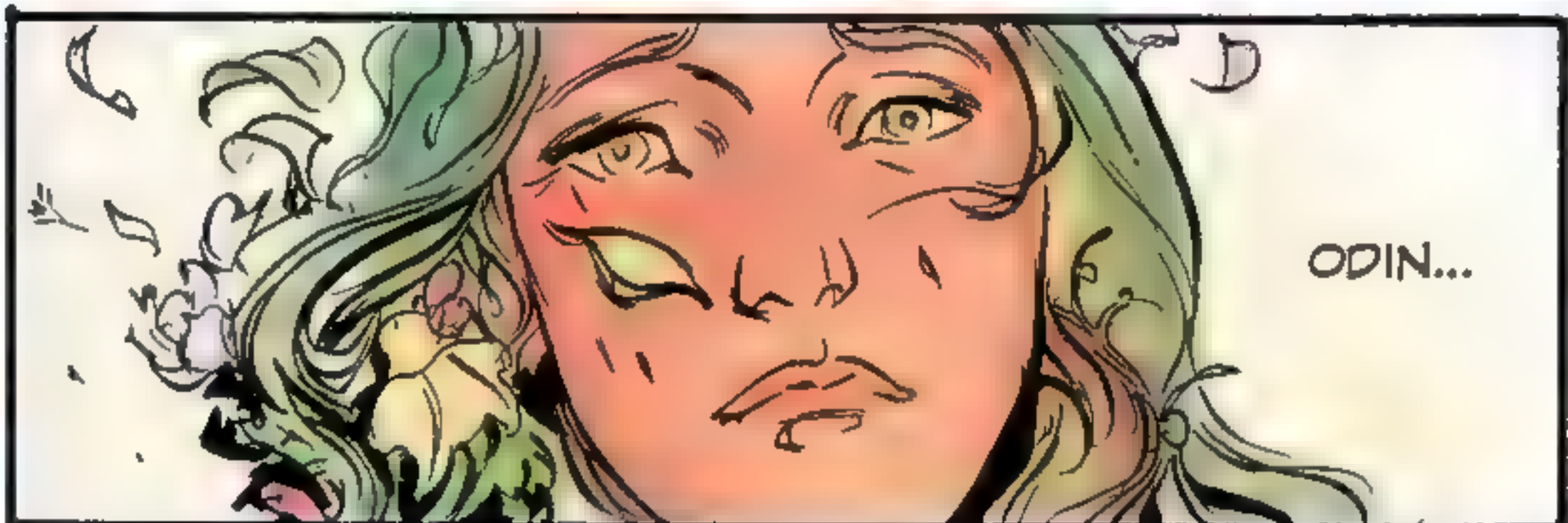
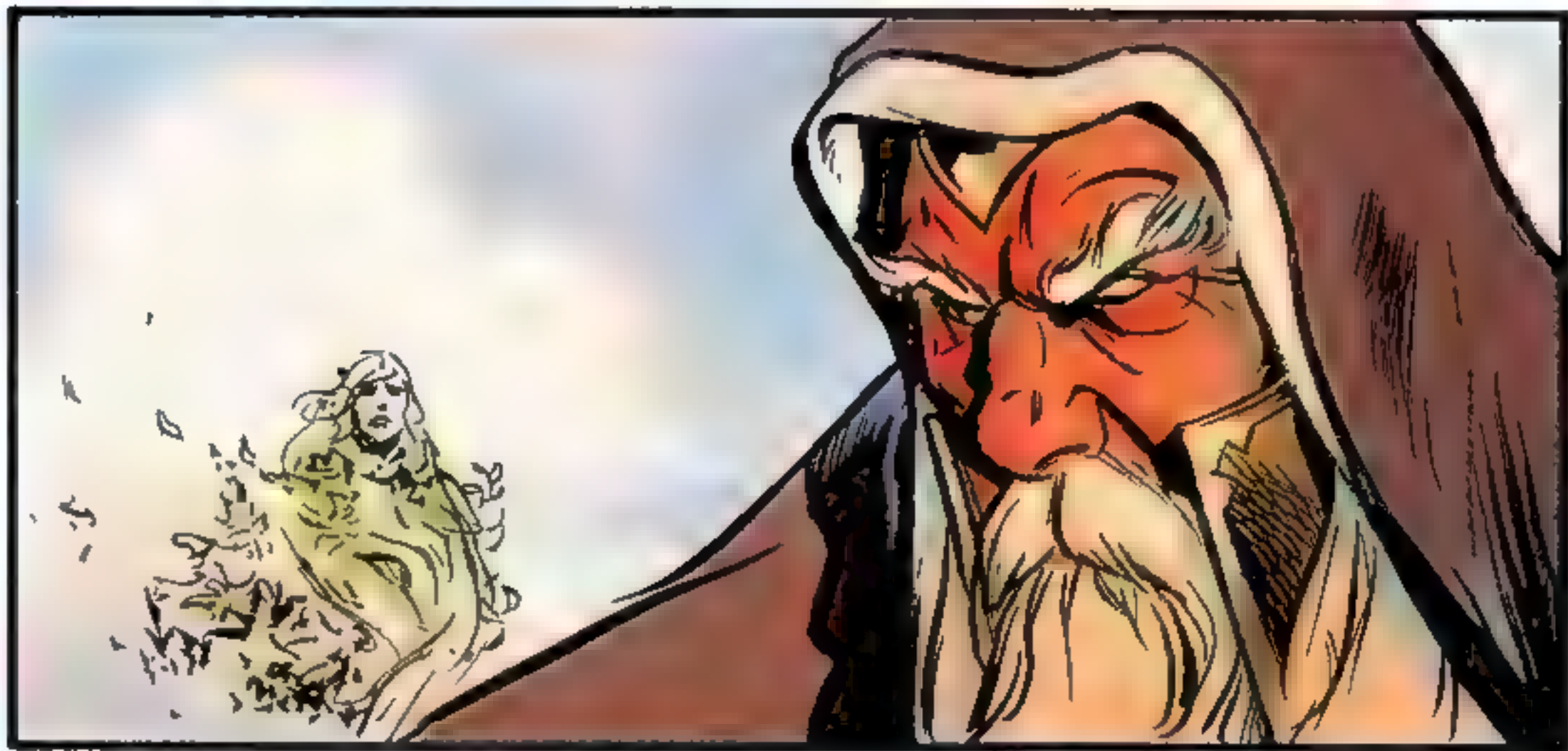
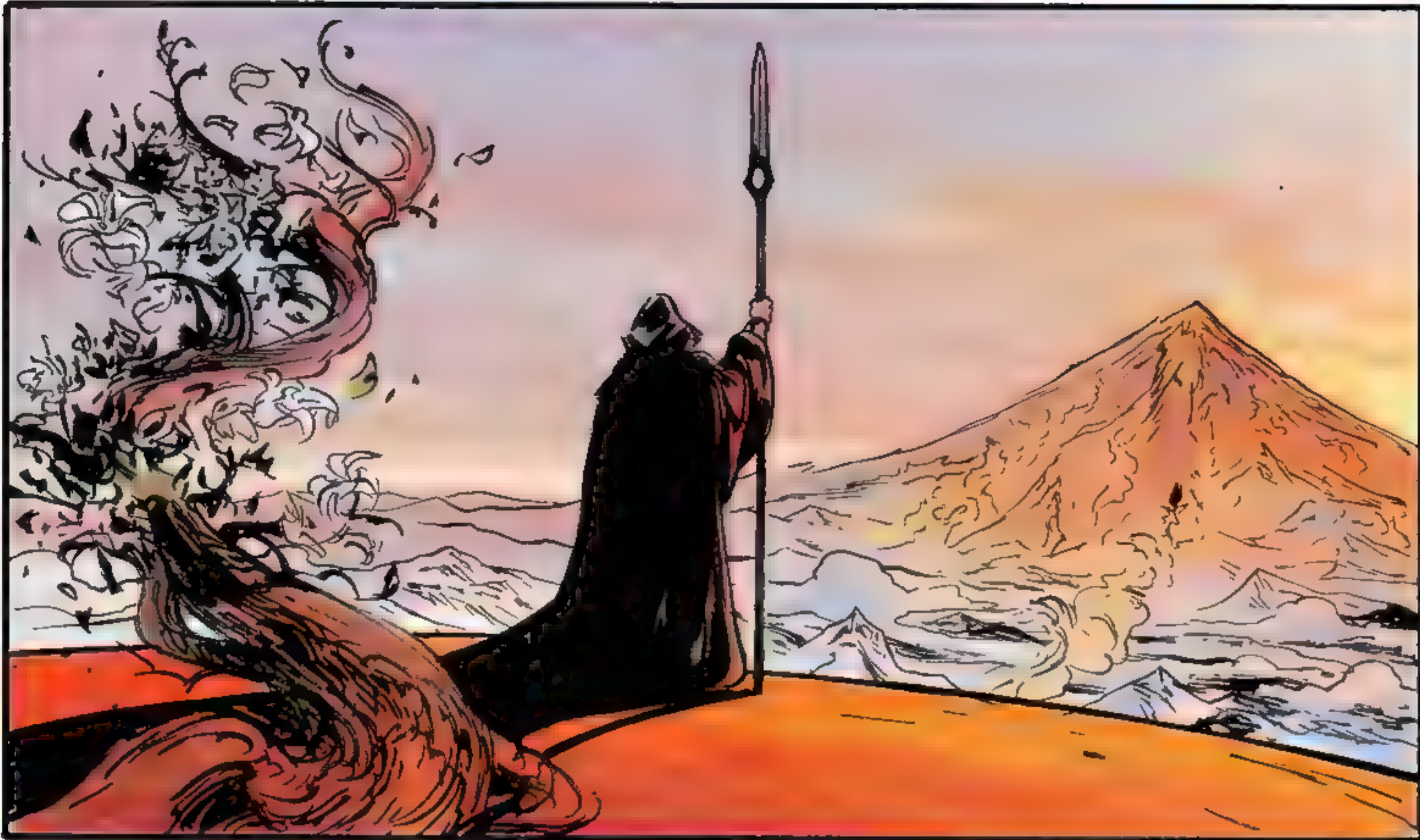
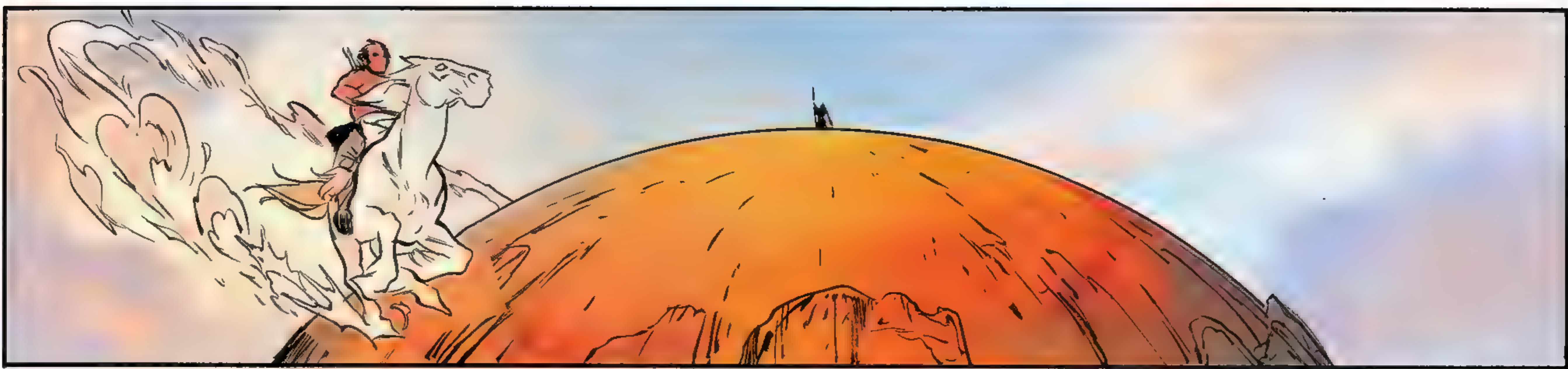
THEN MY
PLACE IS
NOT HERE.

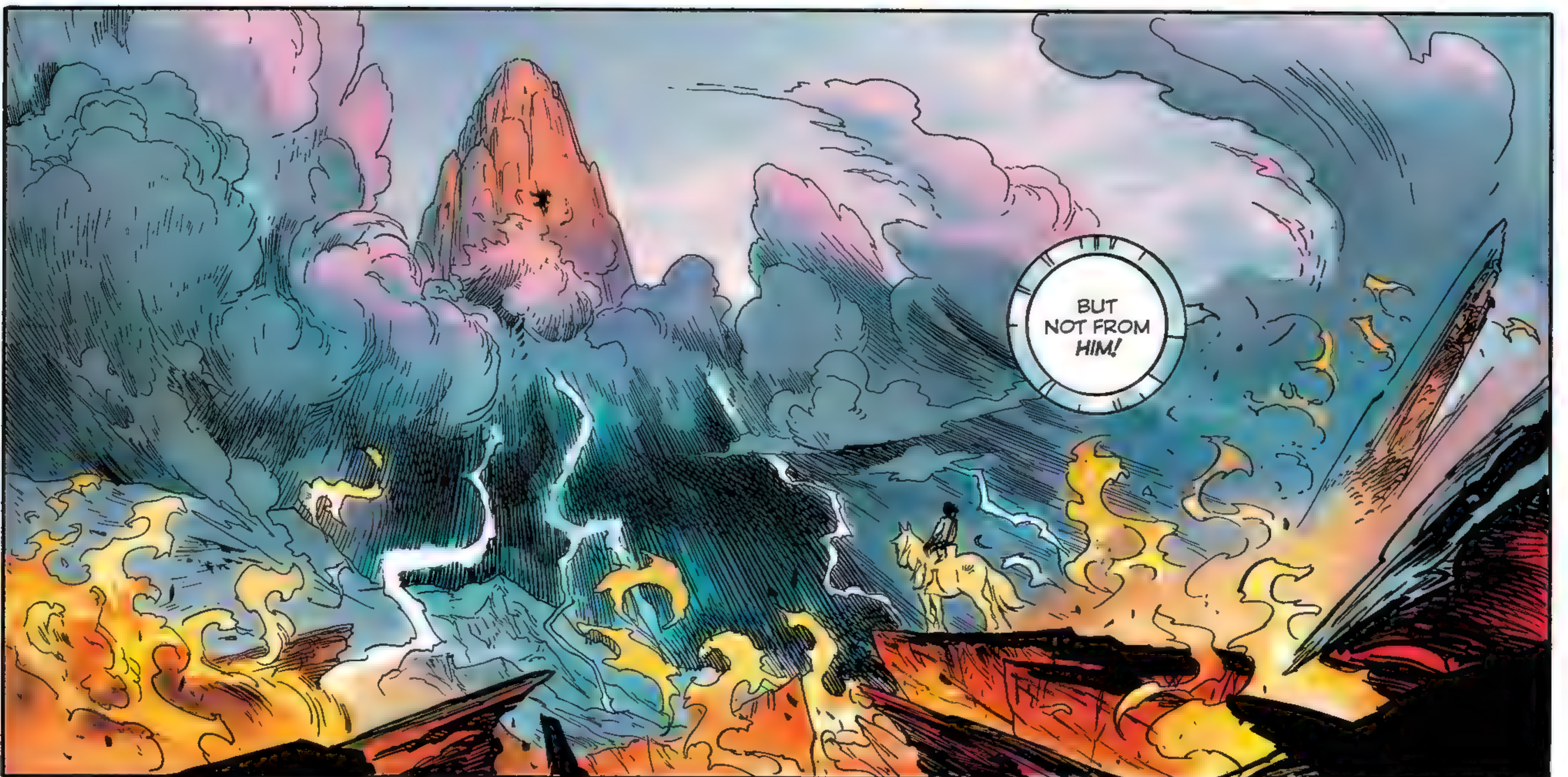
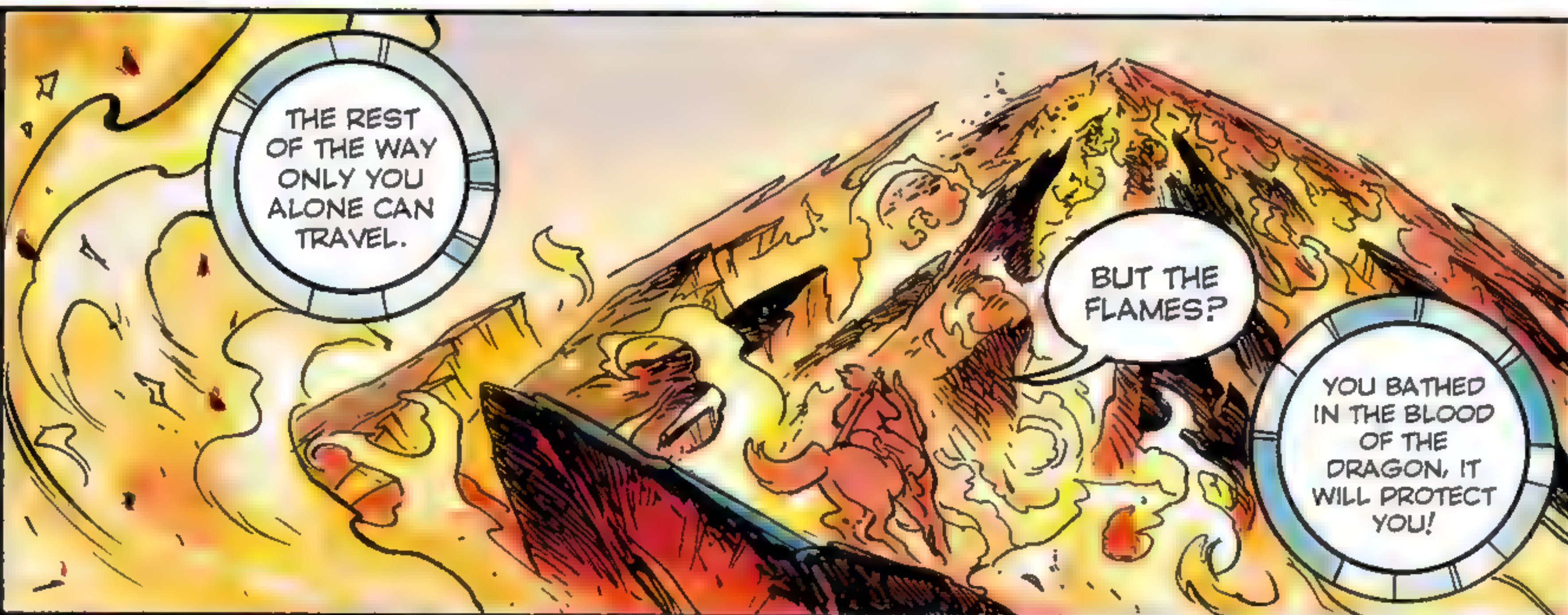
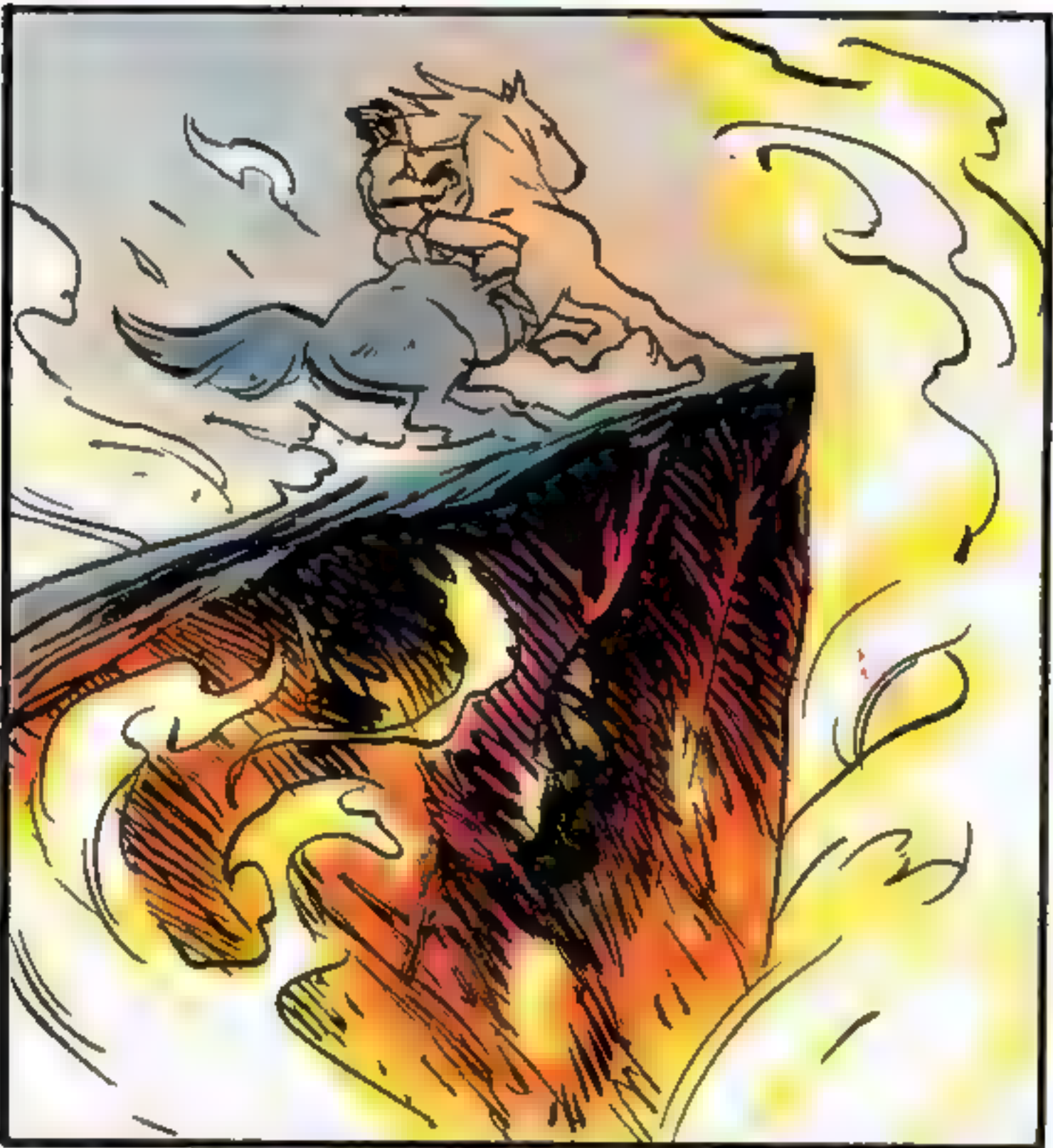


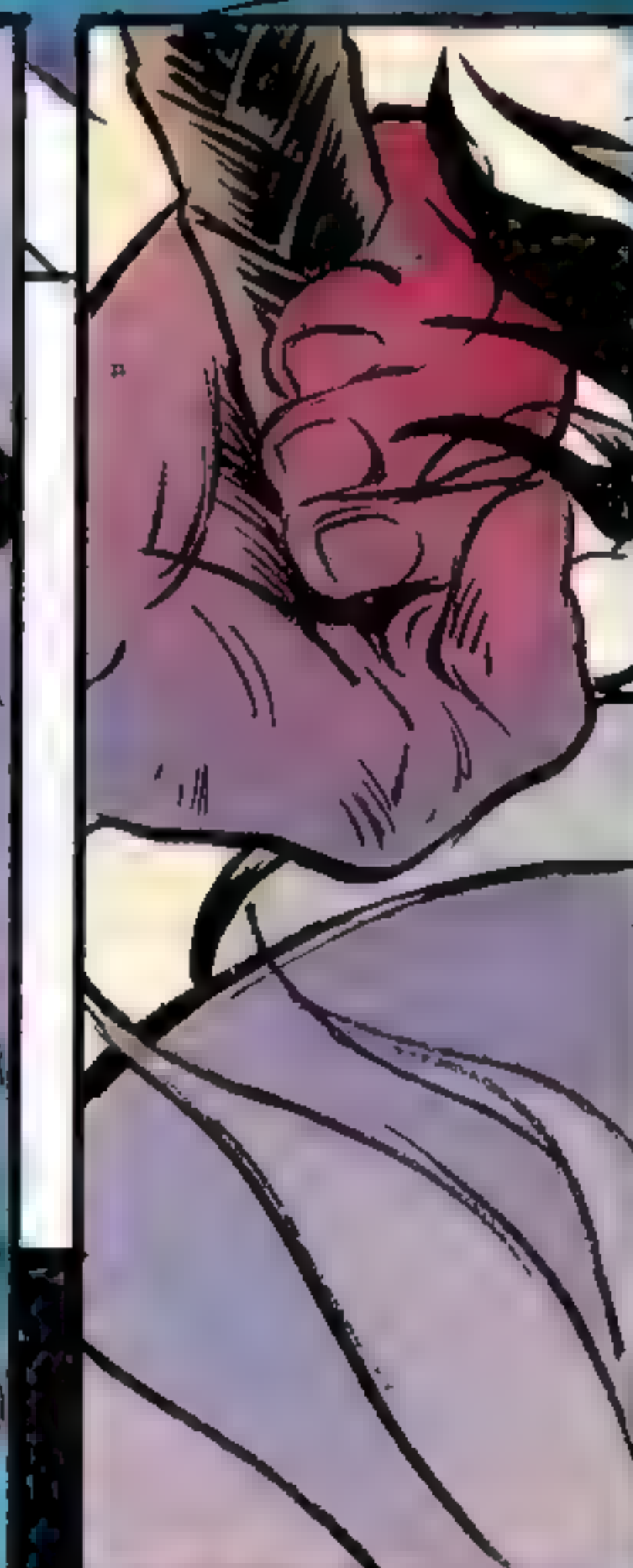
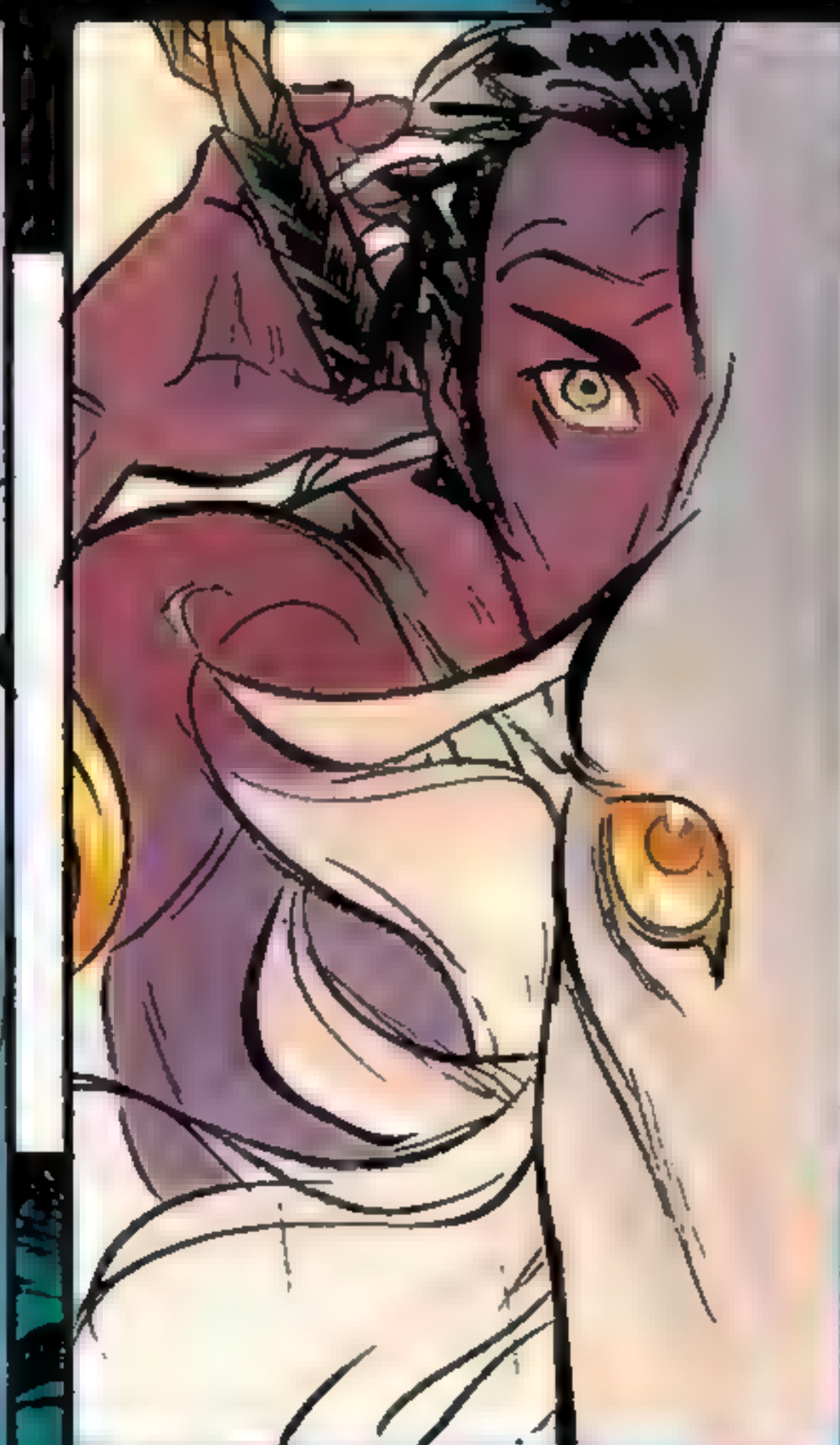
AMONGST
MEN YOU
WILL KNOW
OLD AGE,
SICKNESS,
AND DEATH.



I KNOW
DEATH. I WILL
CONFRONT THE
REST WITH YOUR
DAUGHTER.



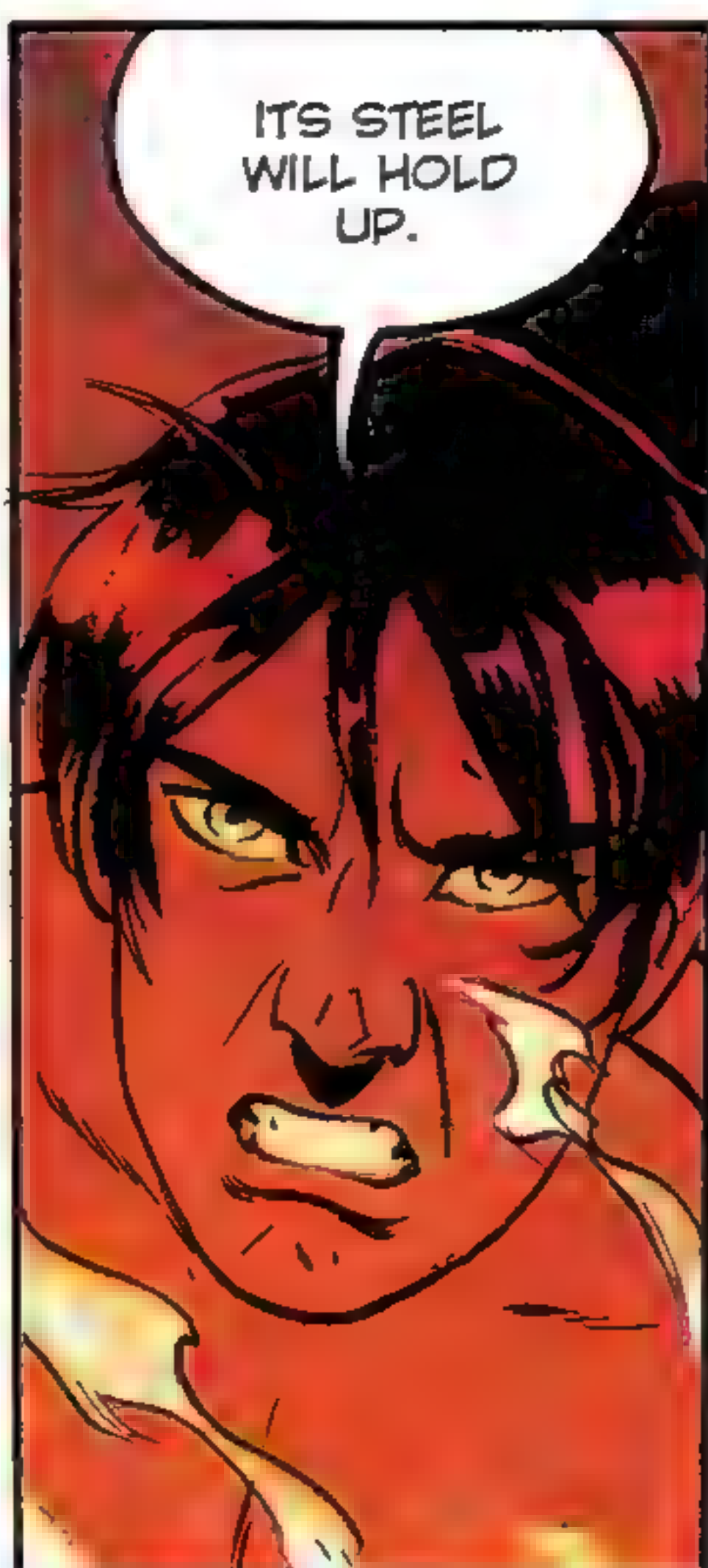








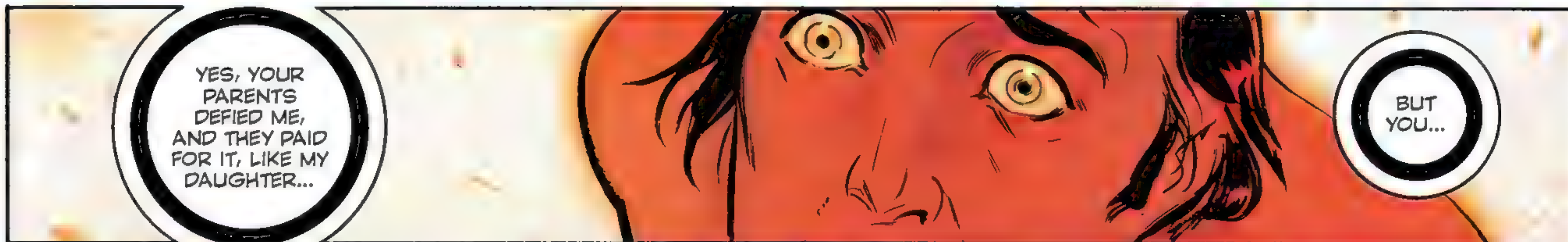
YOU ARE
DRIVEN BY LOVE!
THE POWER OF GOLD
WILL GET AWAY FROM
YOU...IT WON'T SAVE
YOU...WHAT CAN A
LONE SWORD DO
AGAINST THE LAW OF
THE UNIVERSE?



IT'S STEEL
WILL HOLD
UP.



IT ALREADY
BROKE ONCE
AGAINST MY
SPEAR...



YES, YOUR
PARENTS
DEFIED ME,
AND THEY PAID
FOR IT, LIKE MY
DAUGHTER...

BUT
YOU...



YOU ARE
INNOCENT OF
THEIR FAULTS!
SUBJUGATE
YOURSELF TO THE
LAW, SIEGFRIED,
AND I WILL MAKE
YOU MY SON!



I AM
SIEGFRIED
THE DRAGON
SLAYER...

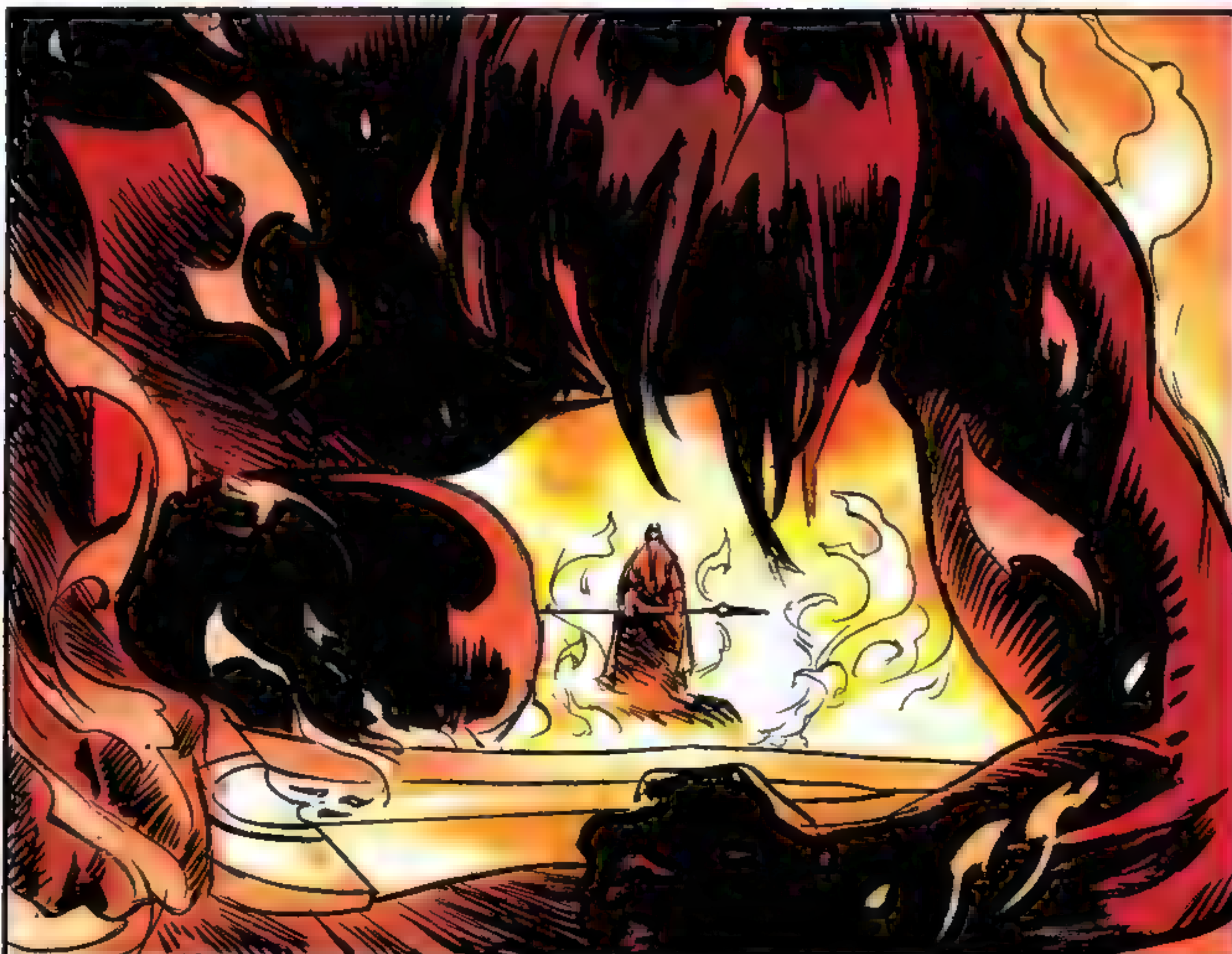
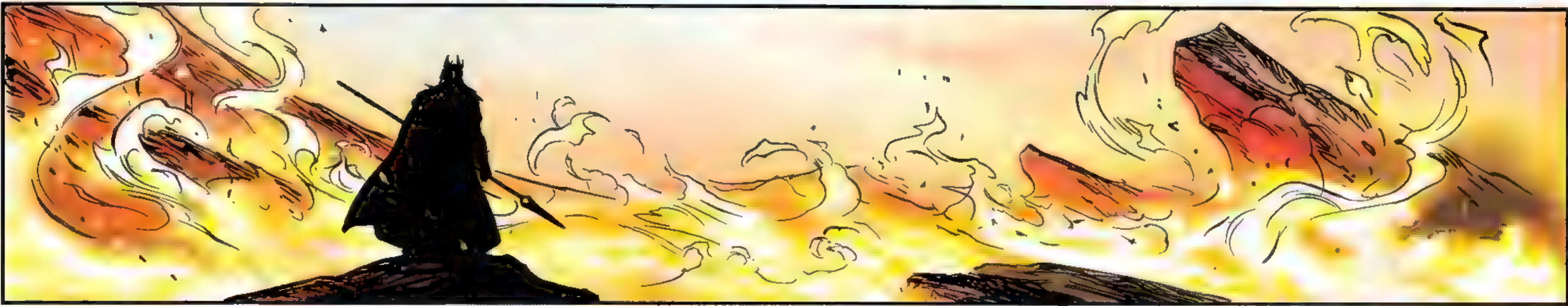
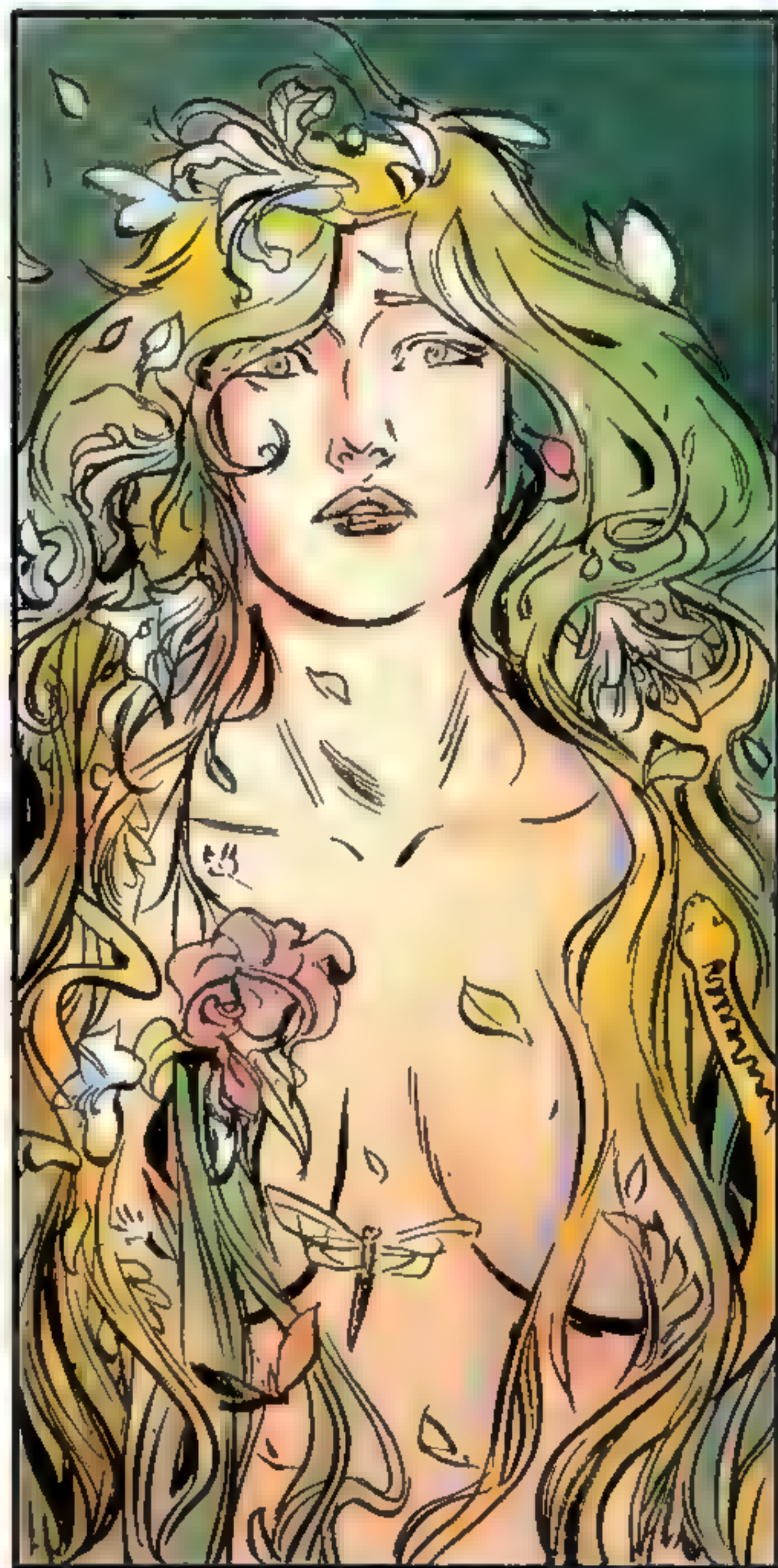
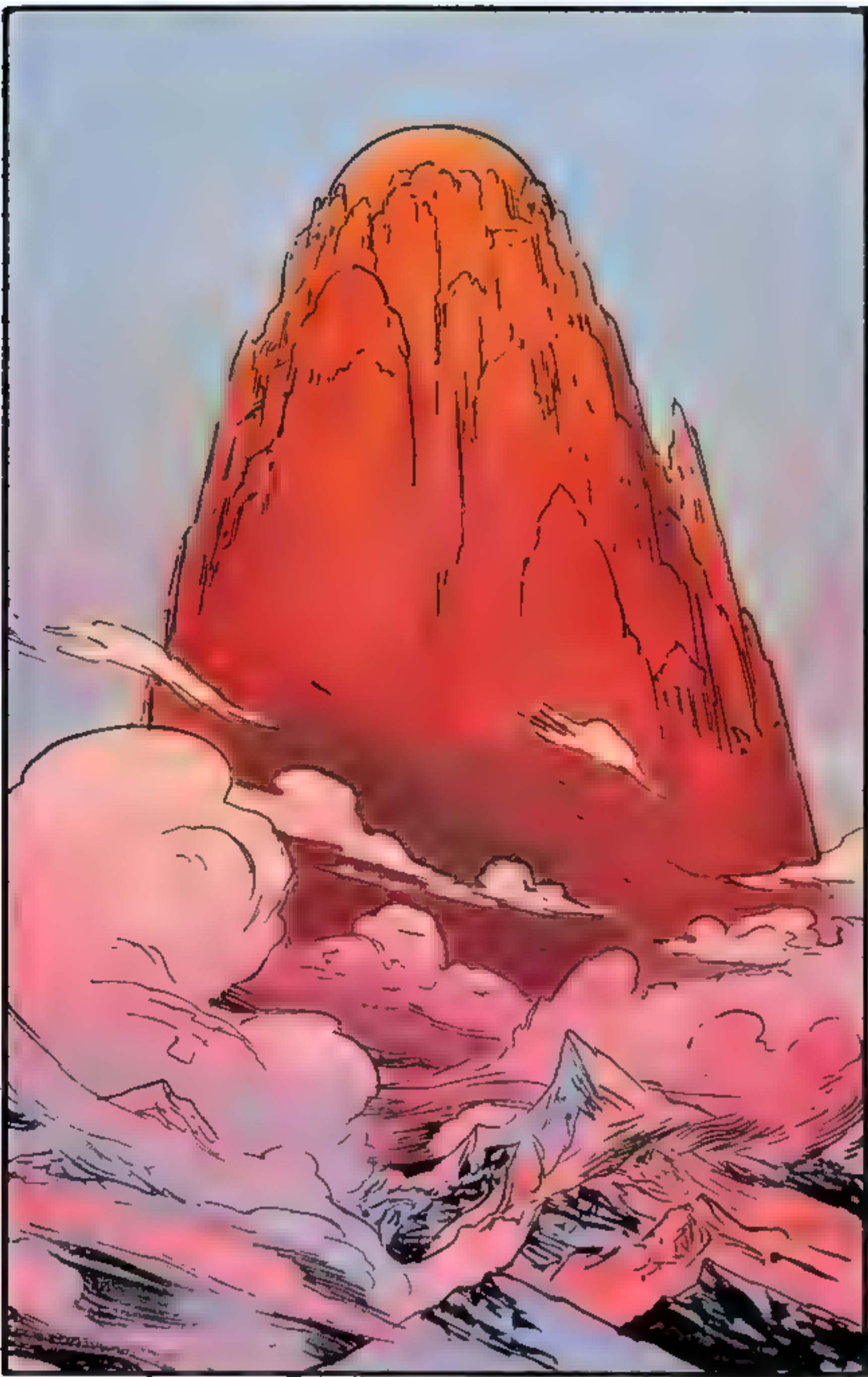
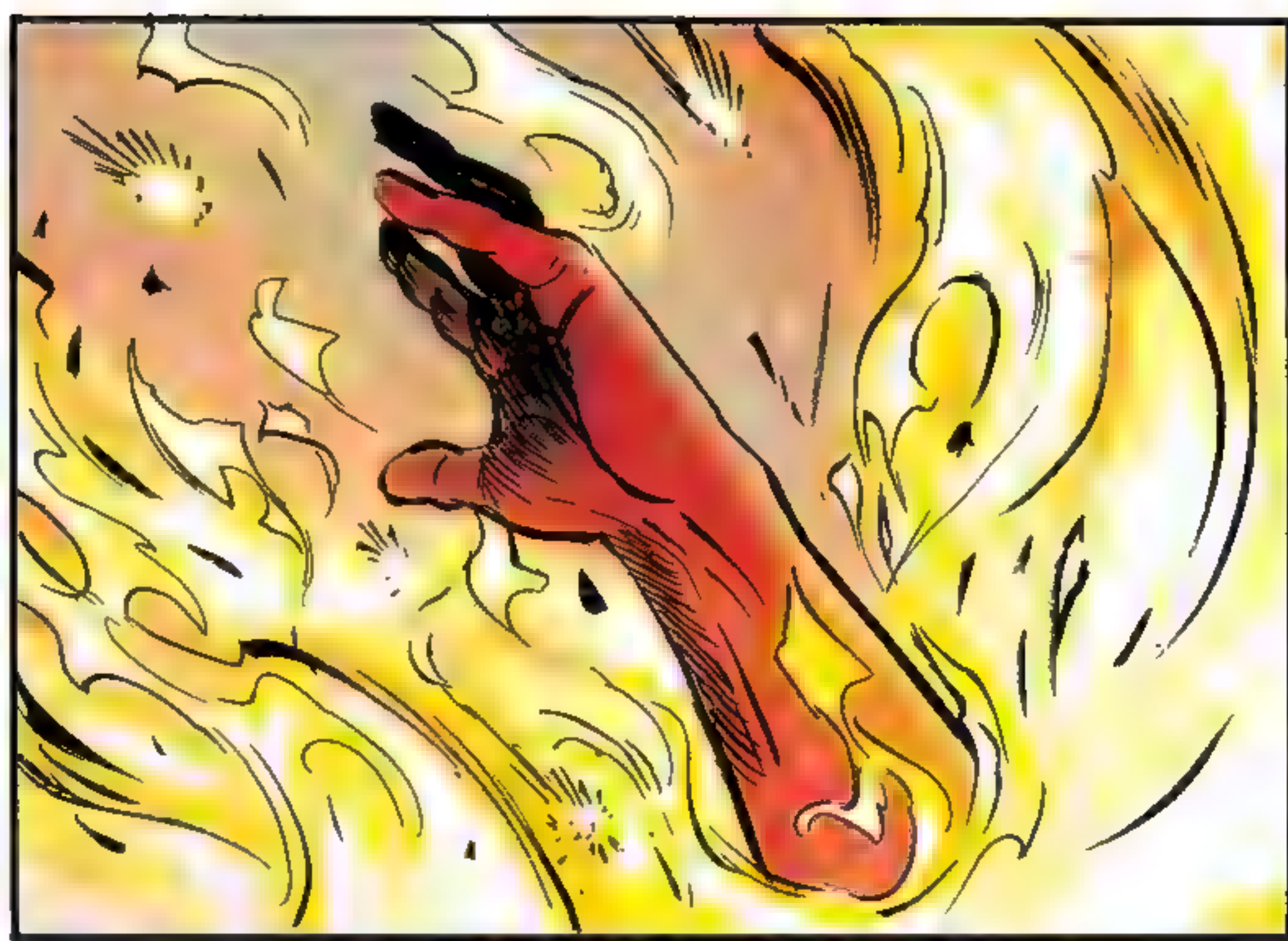


...AND
WHATEVER
THE PRICE,
I SWEAR I
WILL...

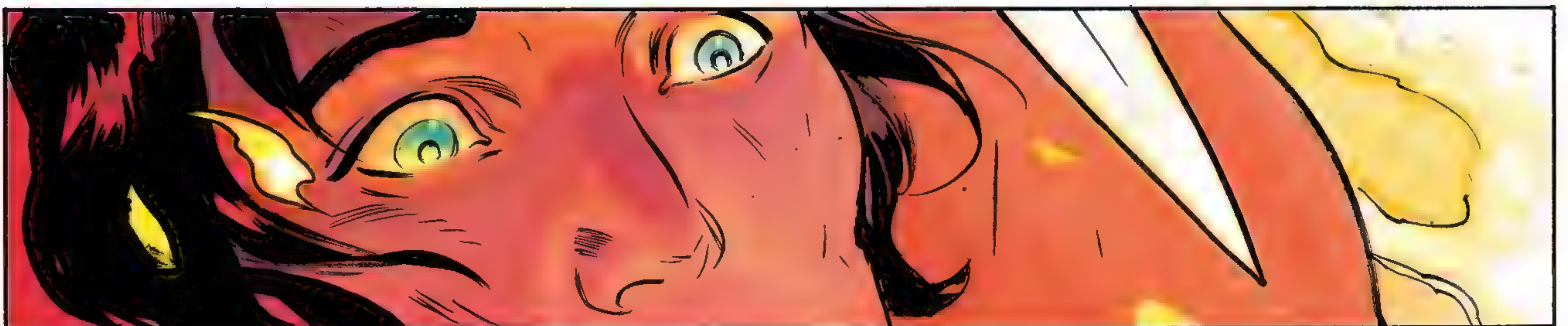
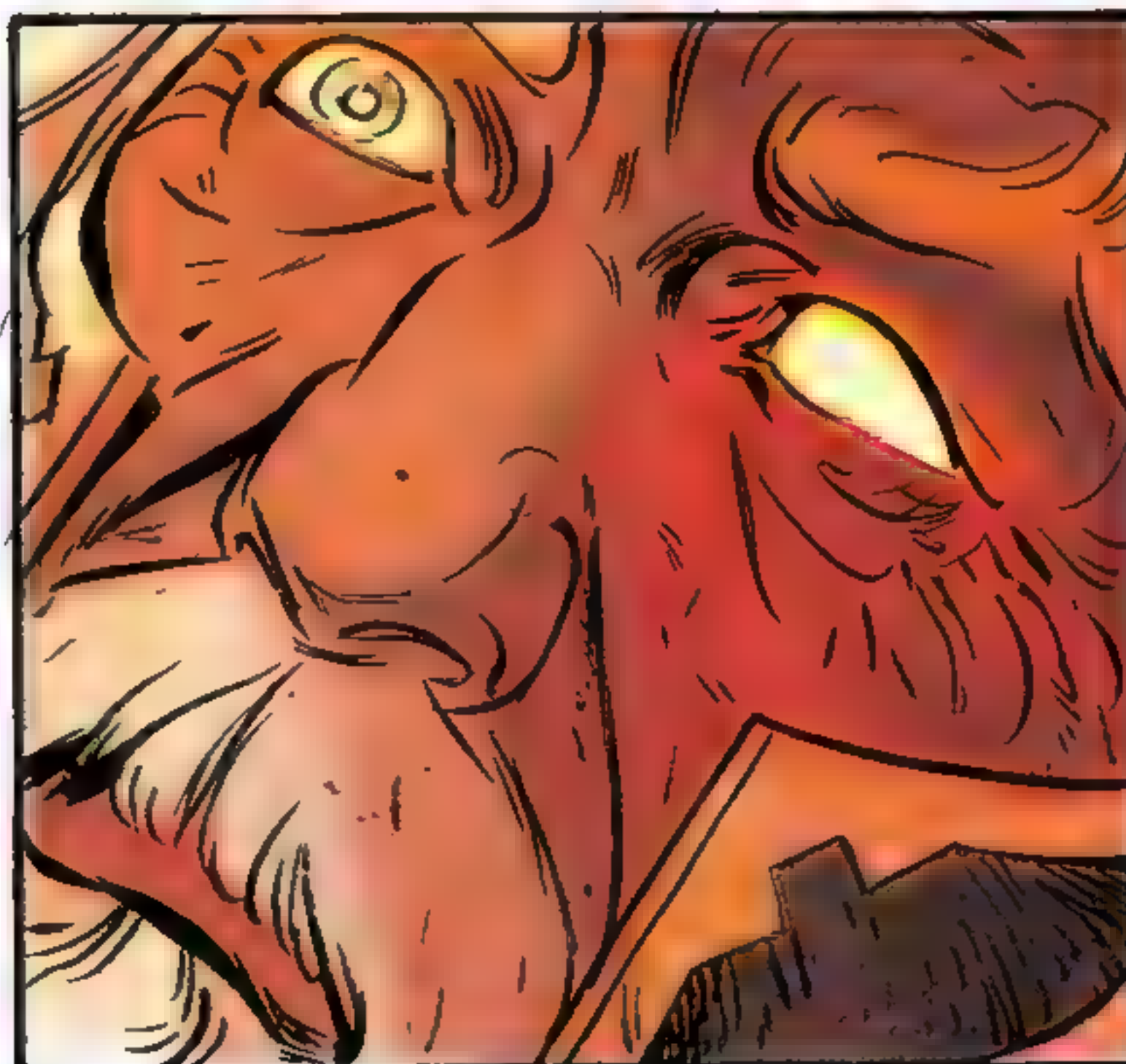
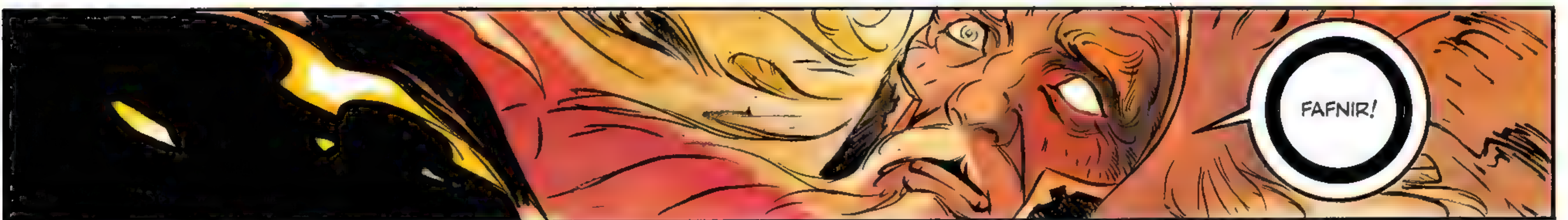


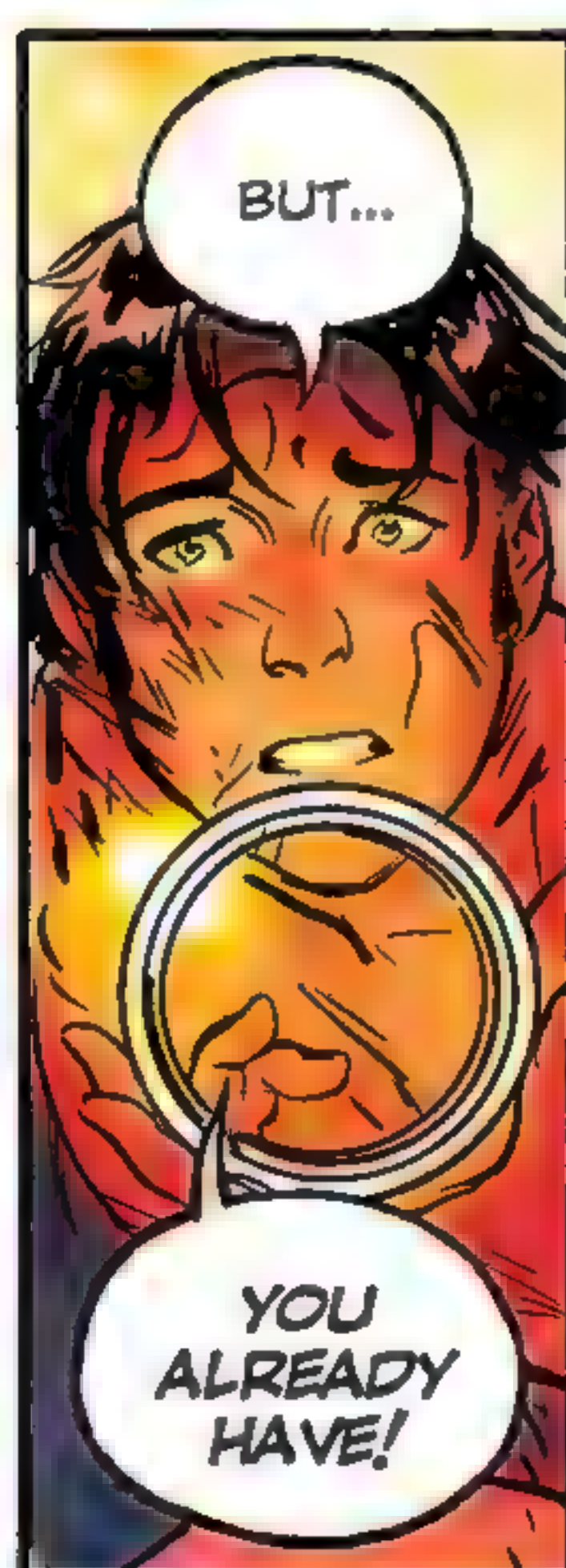
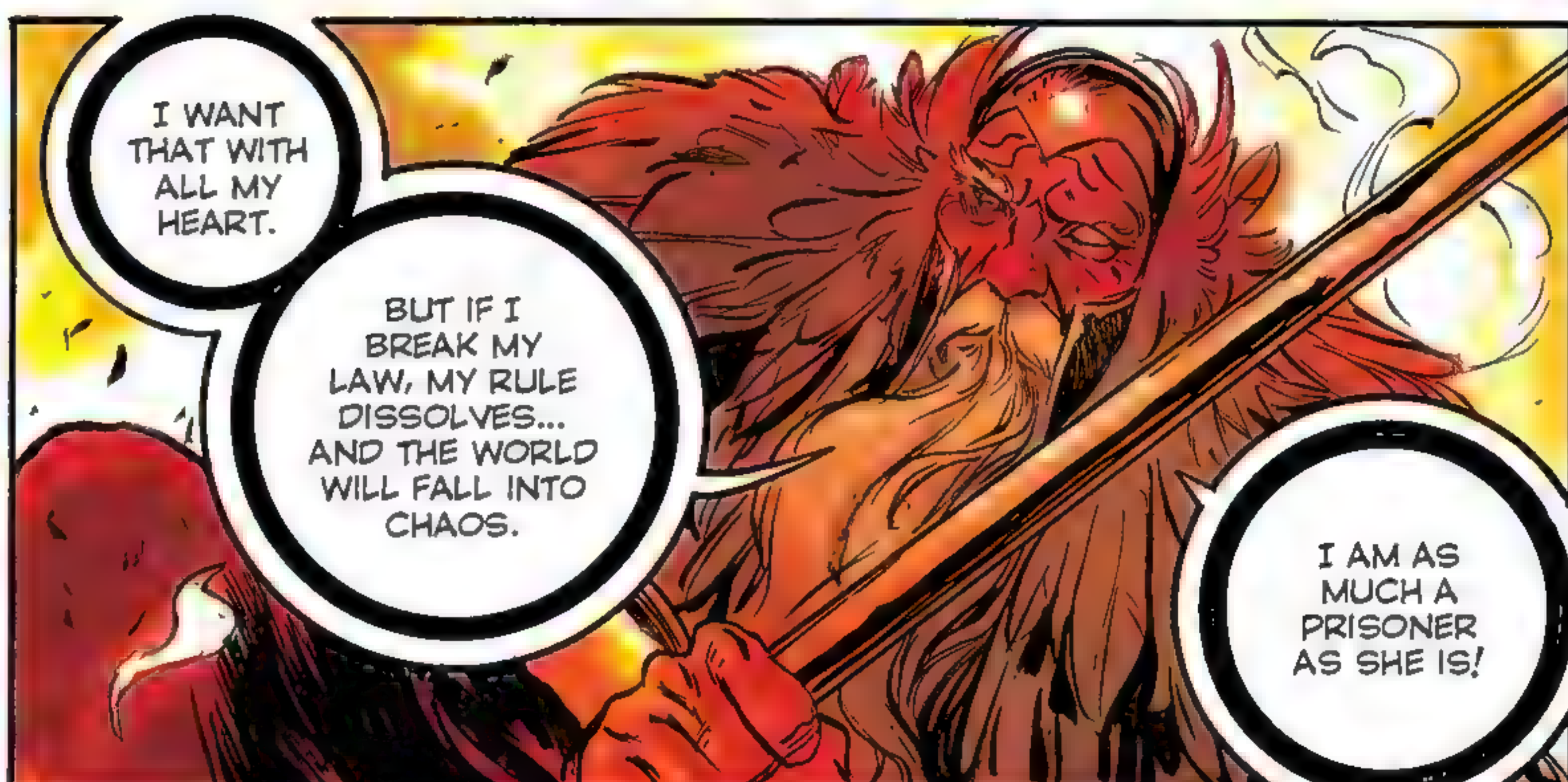
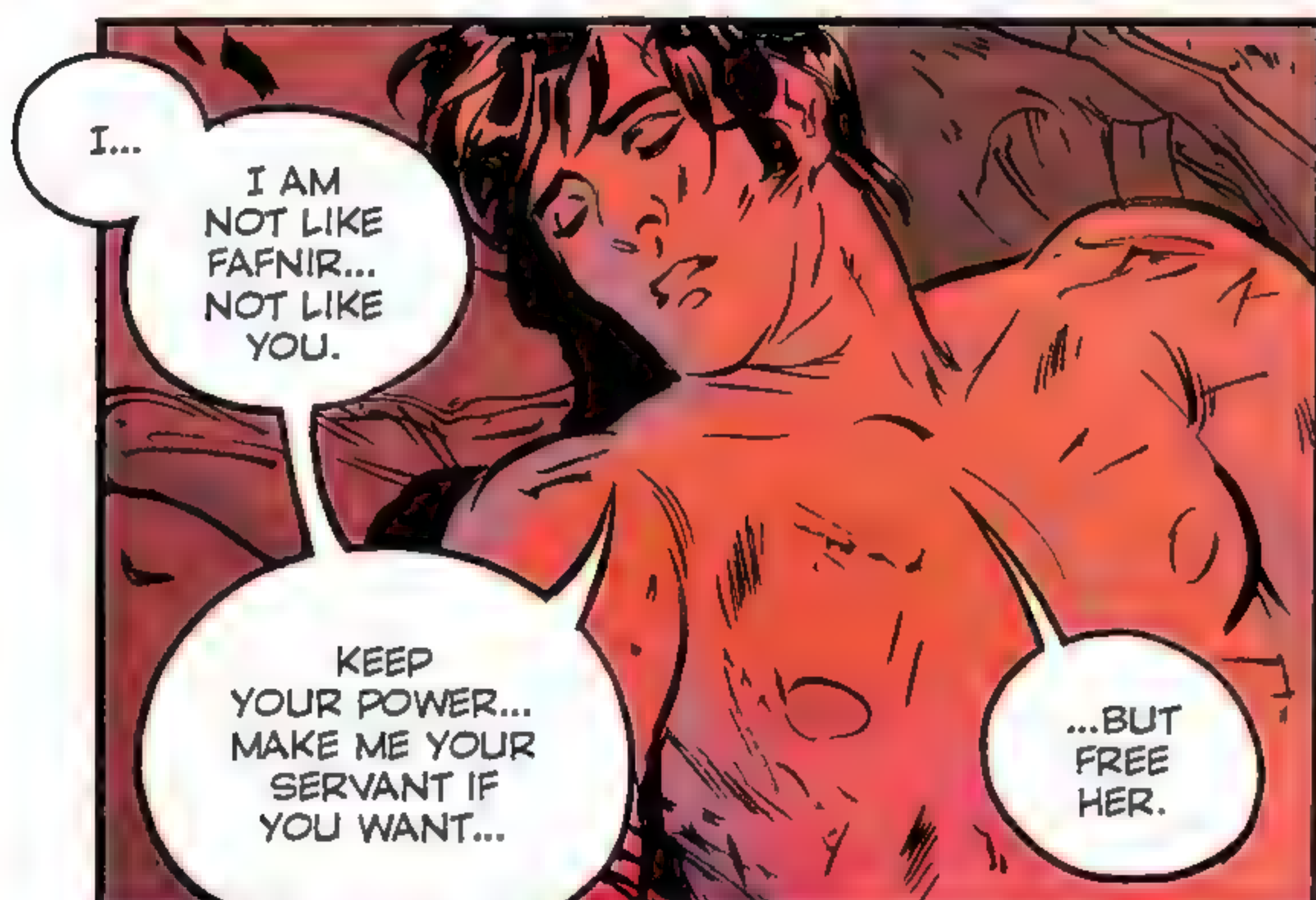
**BREAK
YOUR
LAW!**

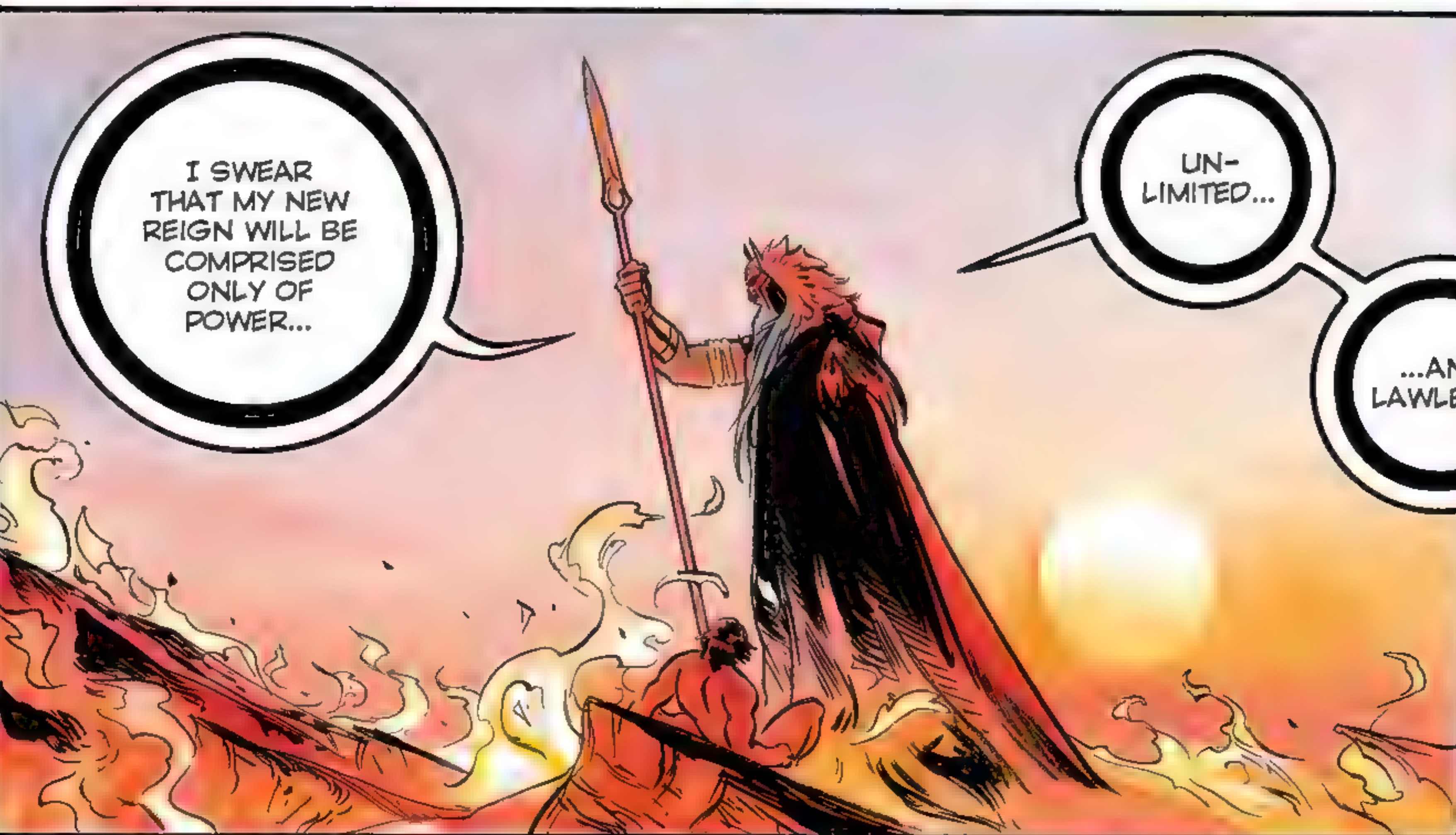
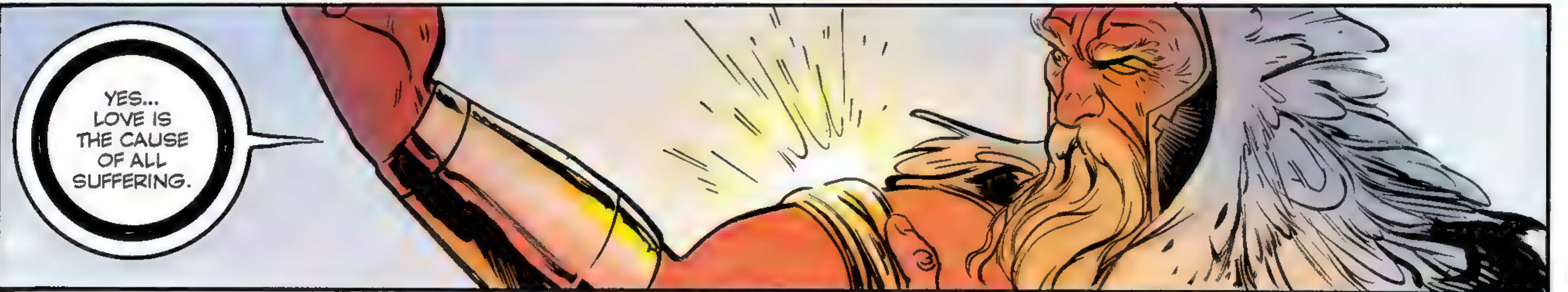
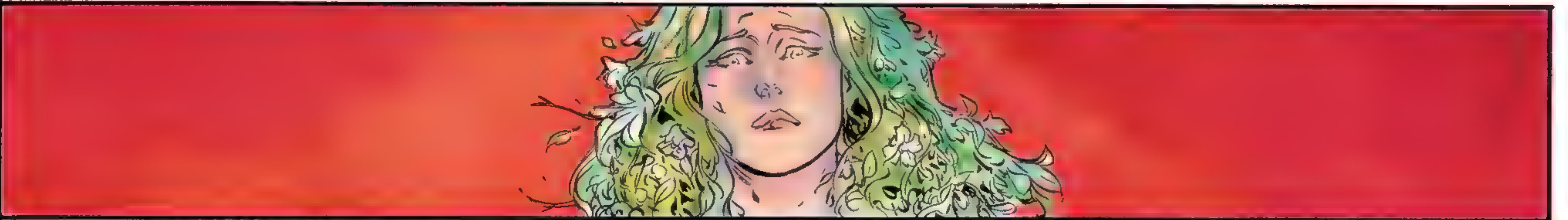
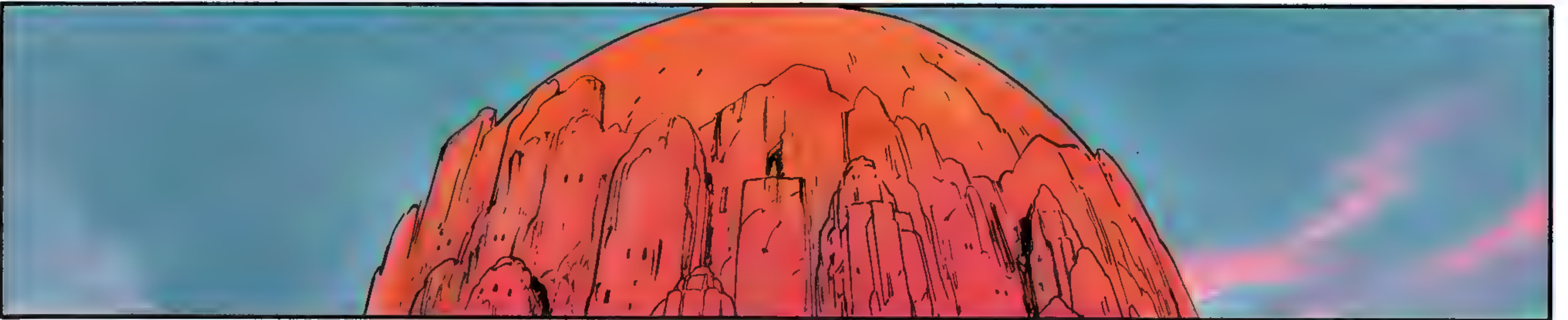
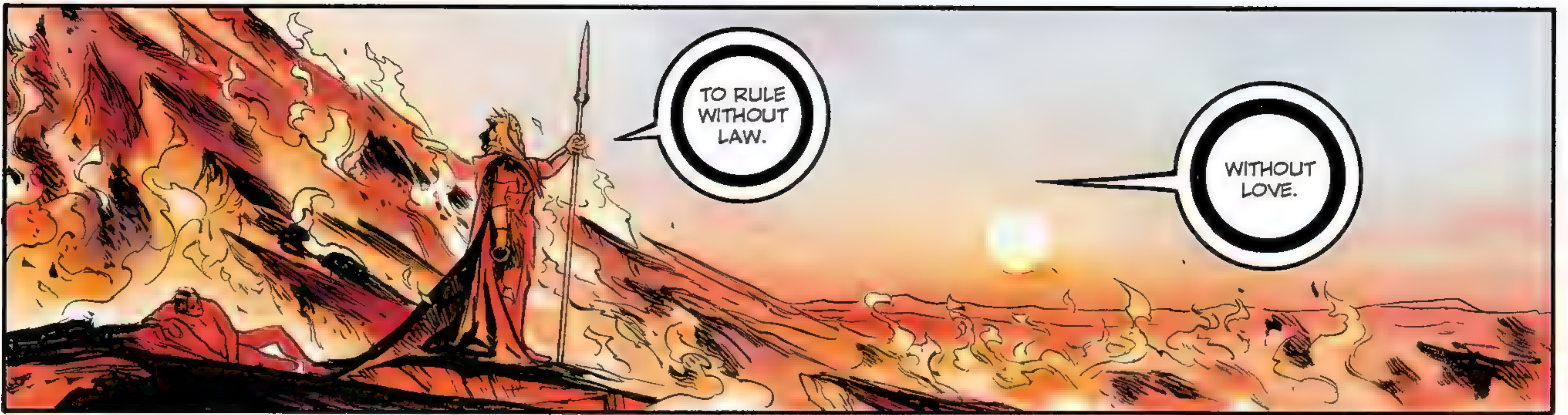


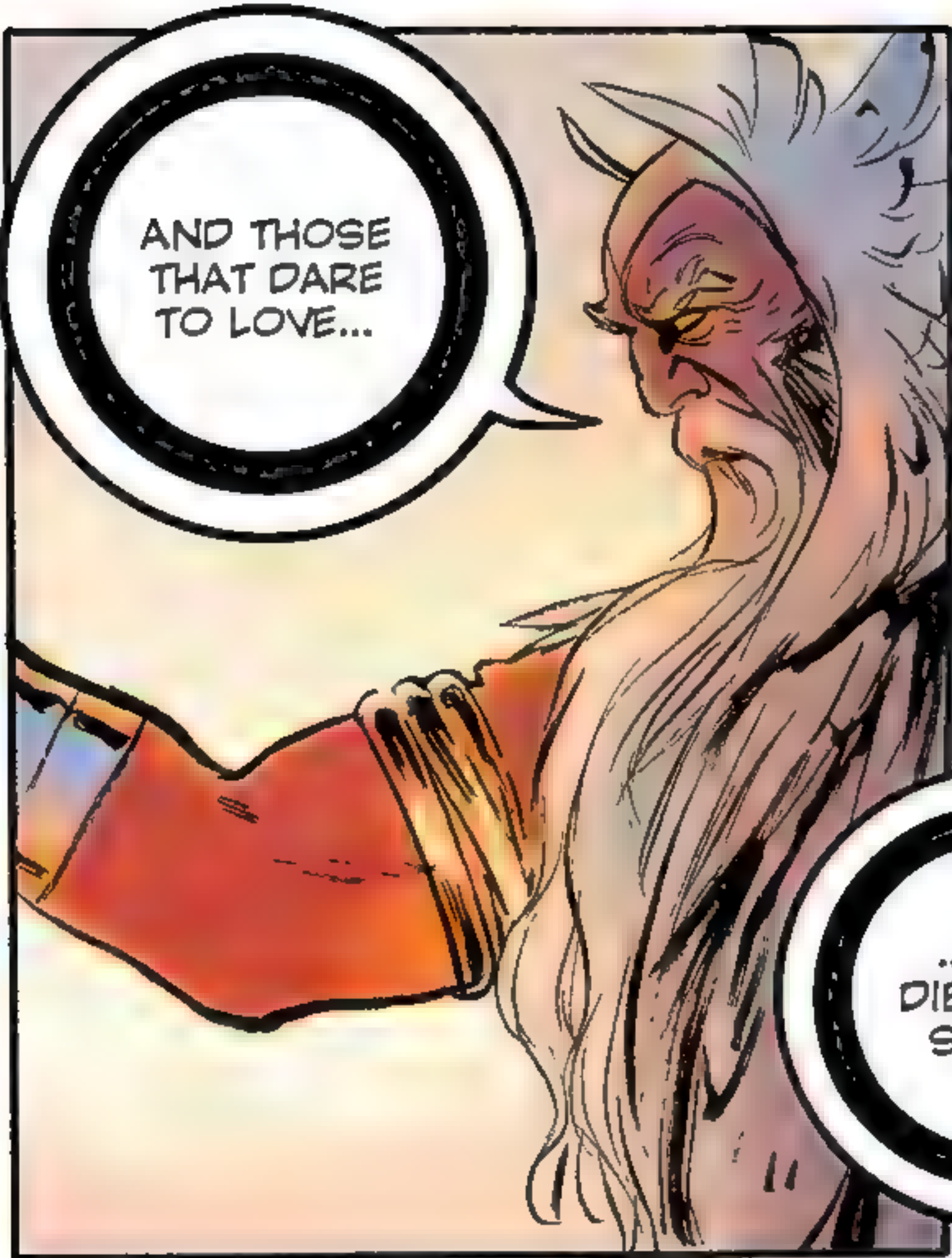


YOUR
SPEAR
OLD
MAN...





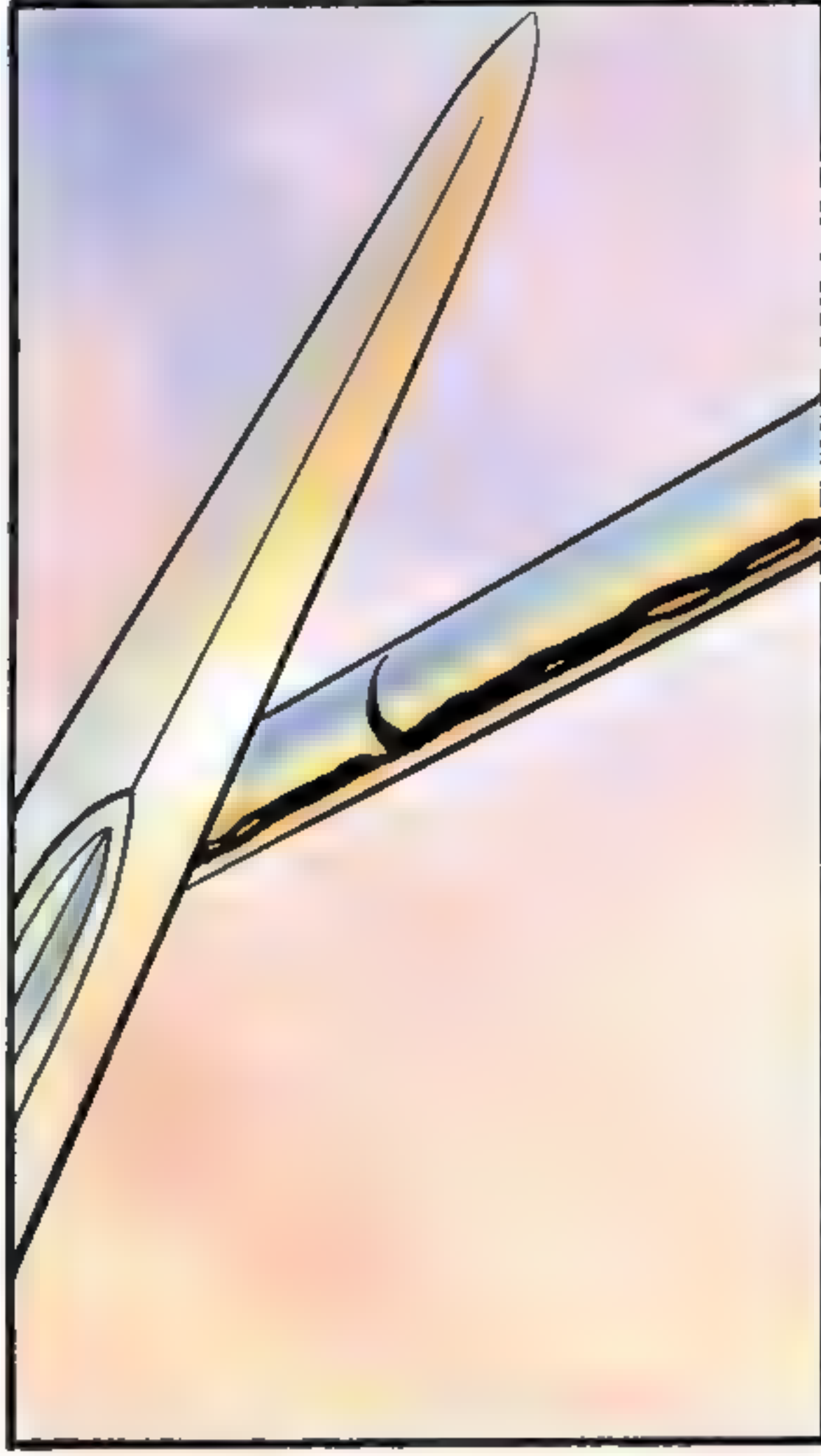




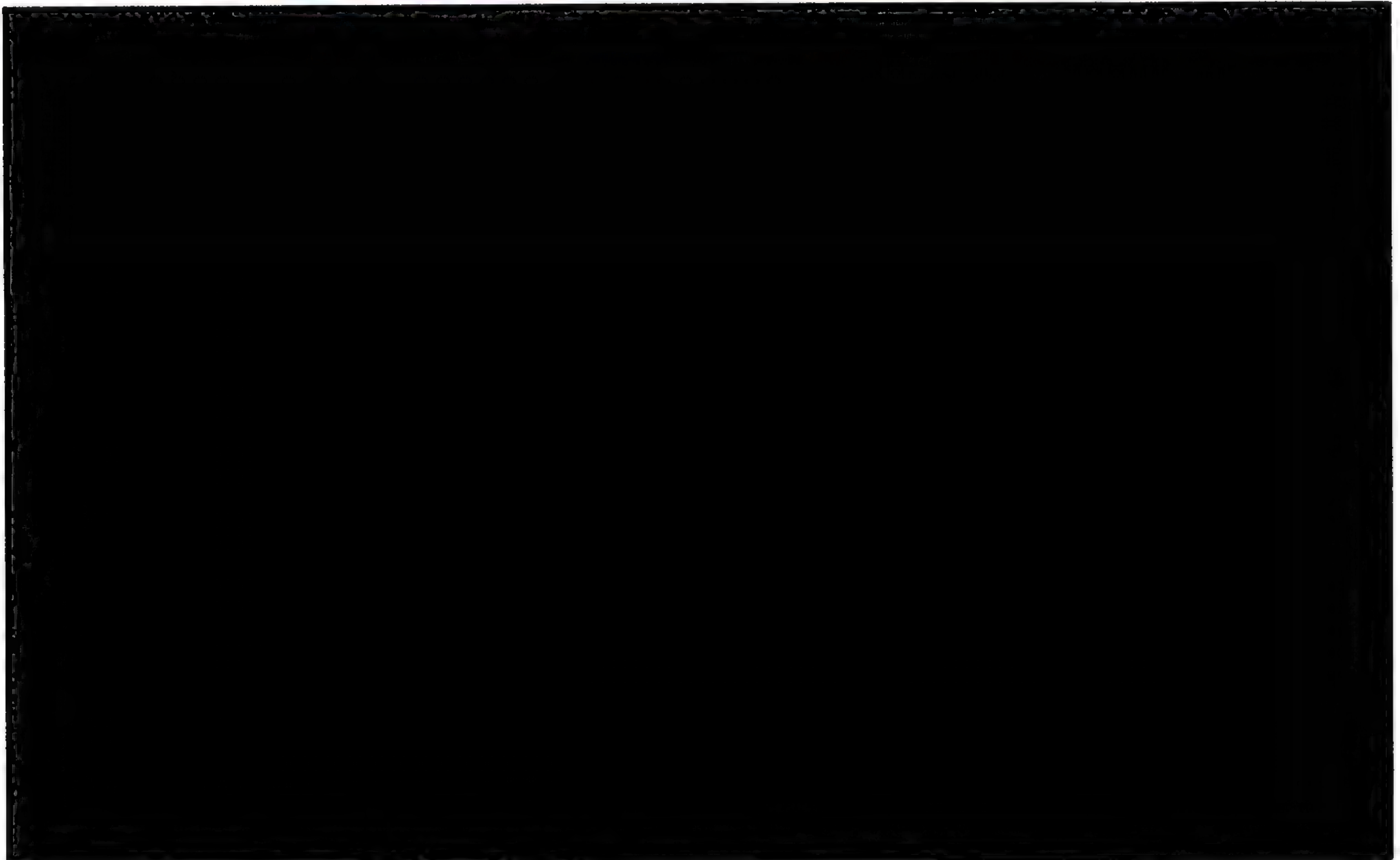
AND THOSE
THAT DARE
TO LOVE...

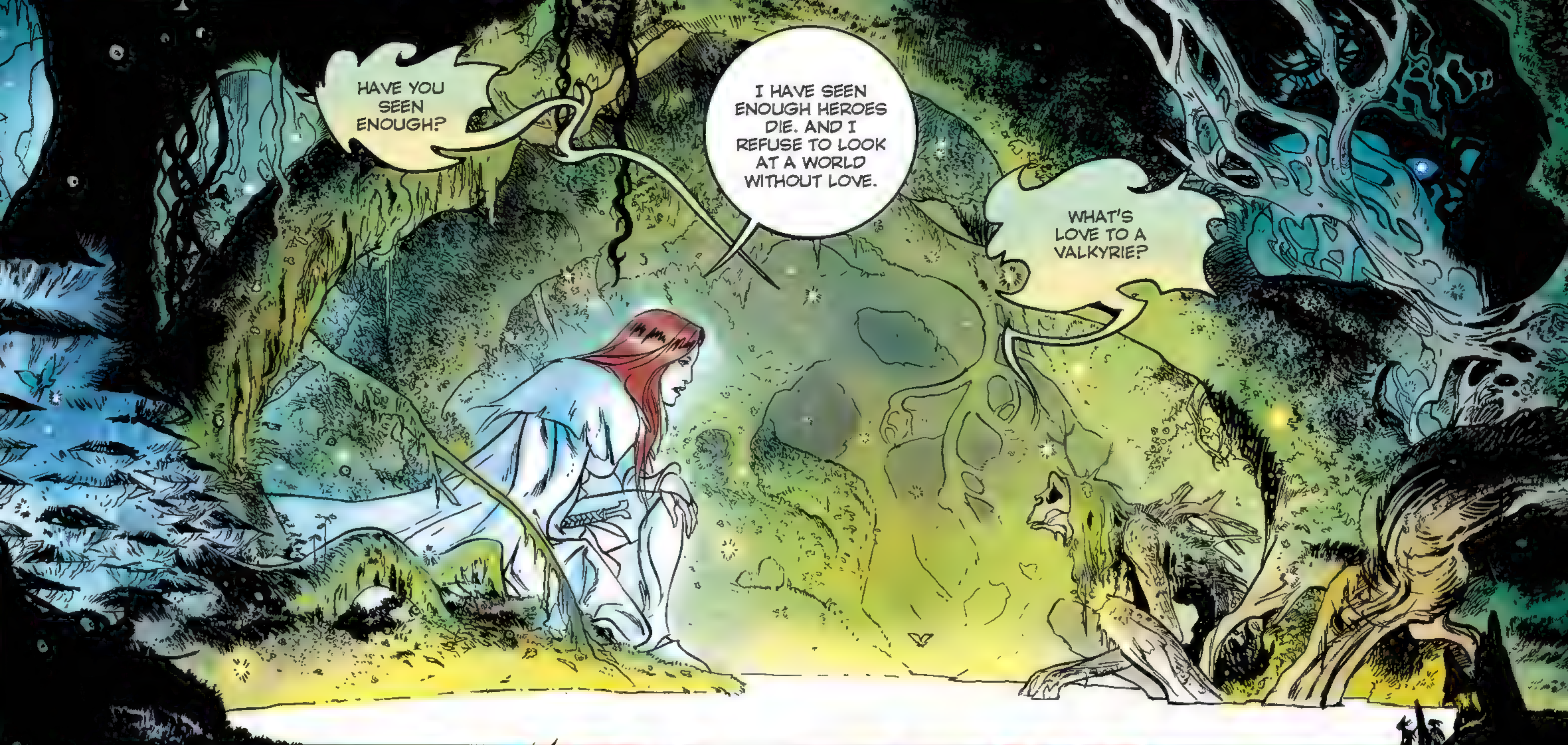


...WILL
DIE BY MY
SPEAR!



STOP.

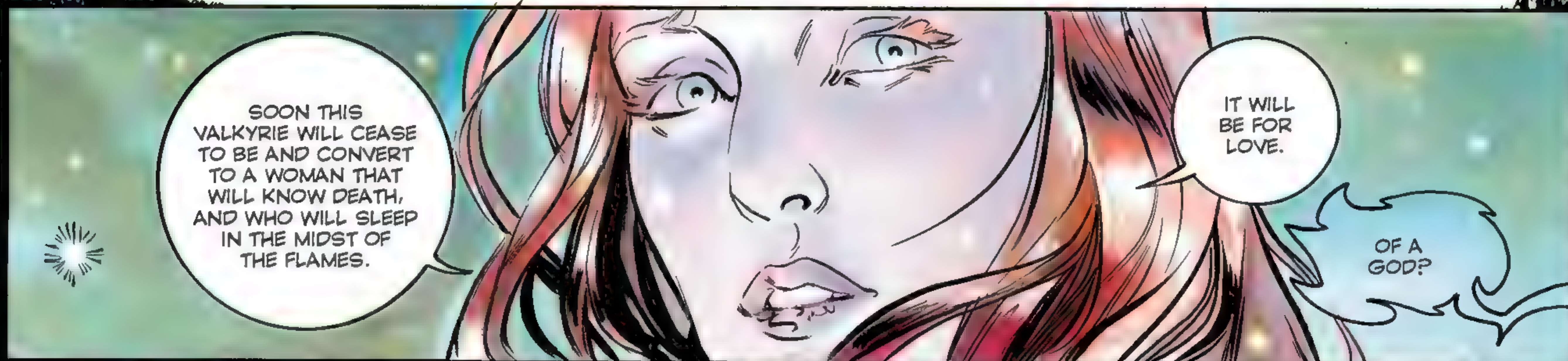




HAVE YOU
SEEN
ENOUGH?

I HAVE SEEN
ENOUGH HEROES
DIE. AND I
REFUSE TO LOOK
AT A WORLD
WITHOUT LOVE.

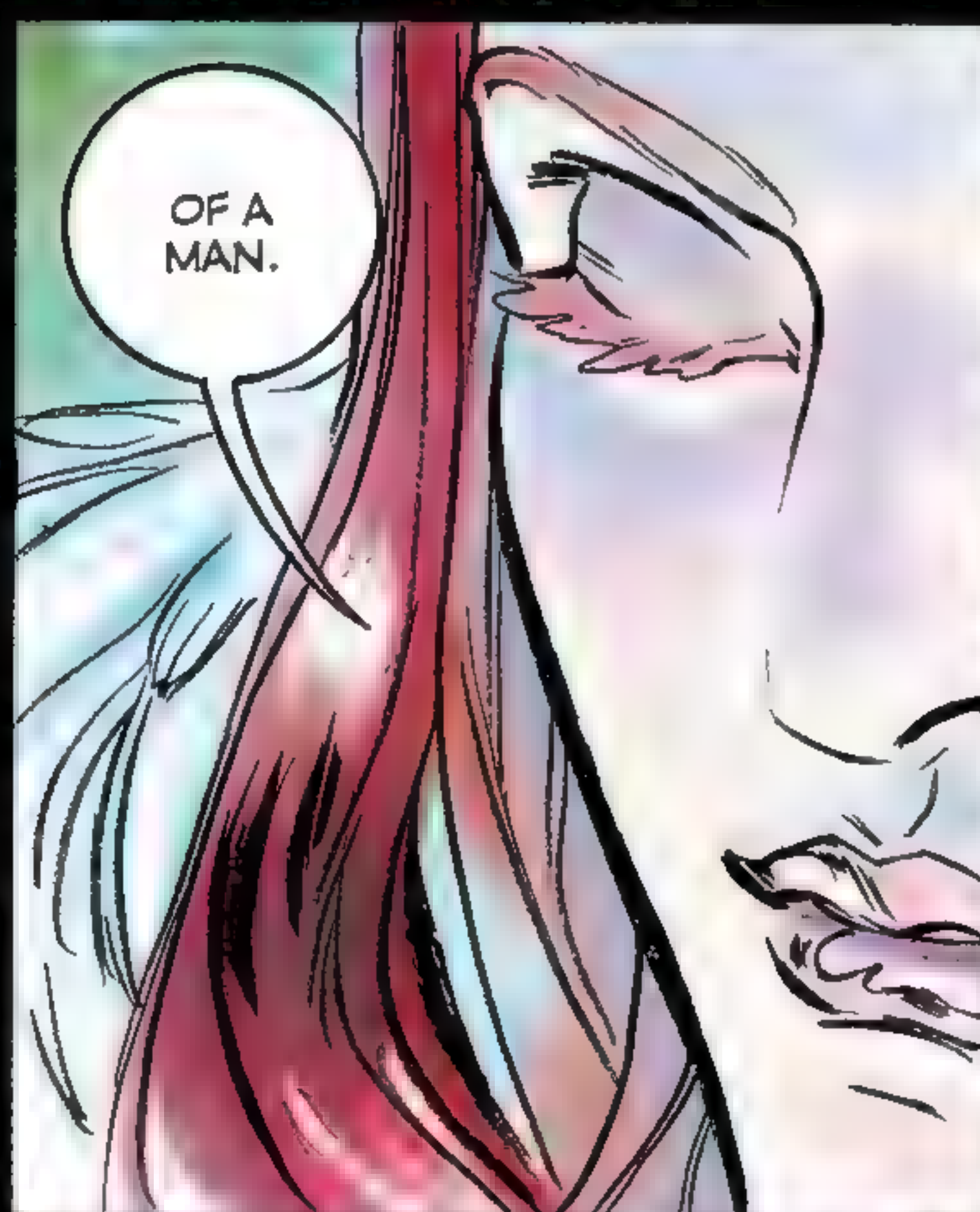
WHAT'S
LOVE TO A
VALKYRIE?



SOON THIS
VALKYRIE WILL CEASE
TO BE AND CONVERT
TO A WOMAN THAT
WILL KNOW DEATH,
AND WHO WILL SLEEP
IN THE MIDST OF
THE FLAMES.

IT WILL
BE FOR
LOVE.

OF A
GOD?

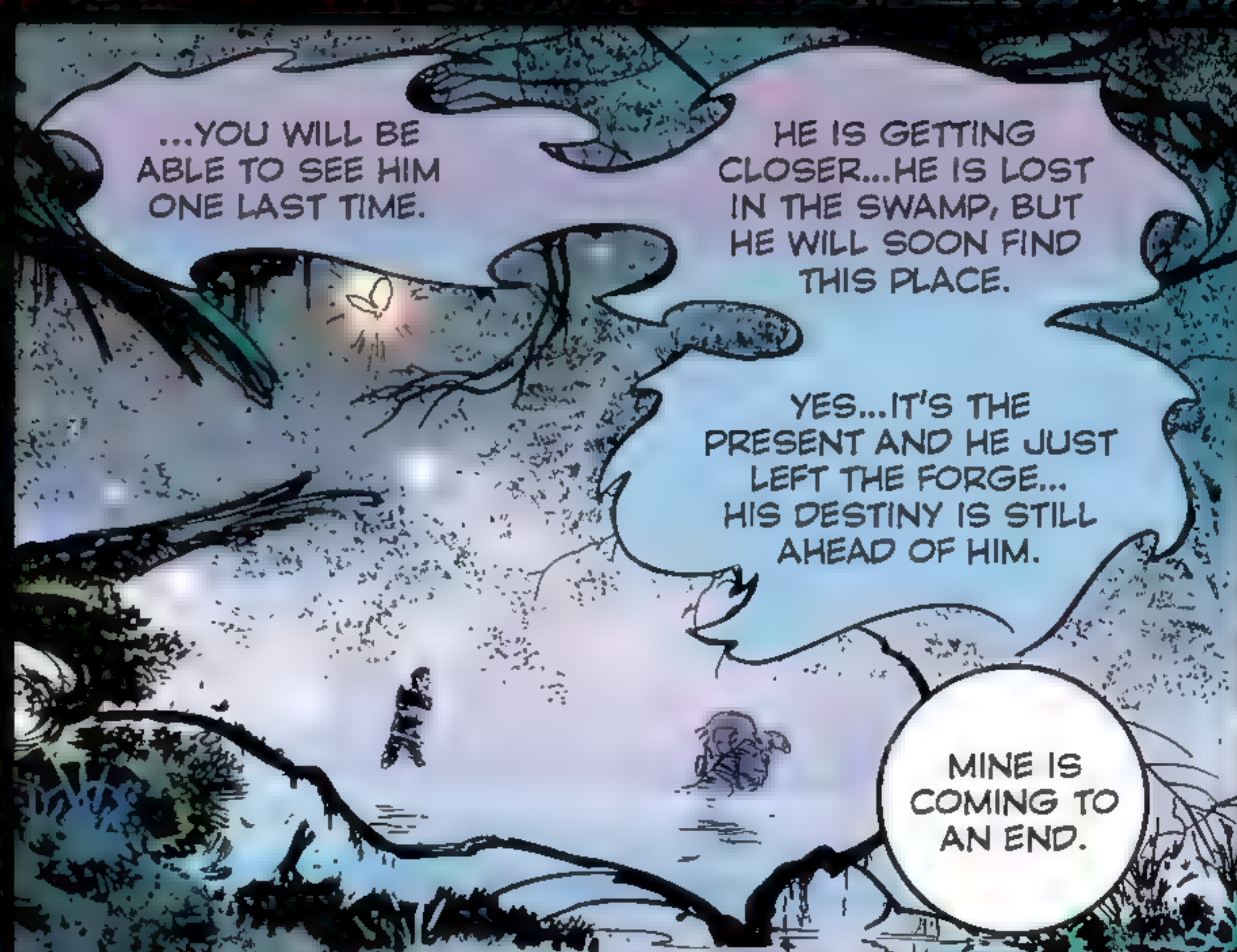


OF A
MAN.



SO YOU WILL SAVE SIEGFRIED.
YOU WILL GIVE HIM YOUR
STEED. YOU WILL BE
CONDEMNED AND YOU WILL
LOSE YOUR IMMORTALITY.

BUT FIRST...



...YOU WILL BE
ABLE TO SEE HIM
ONE LAST TIME.

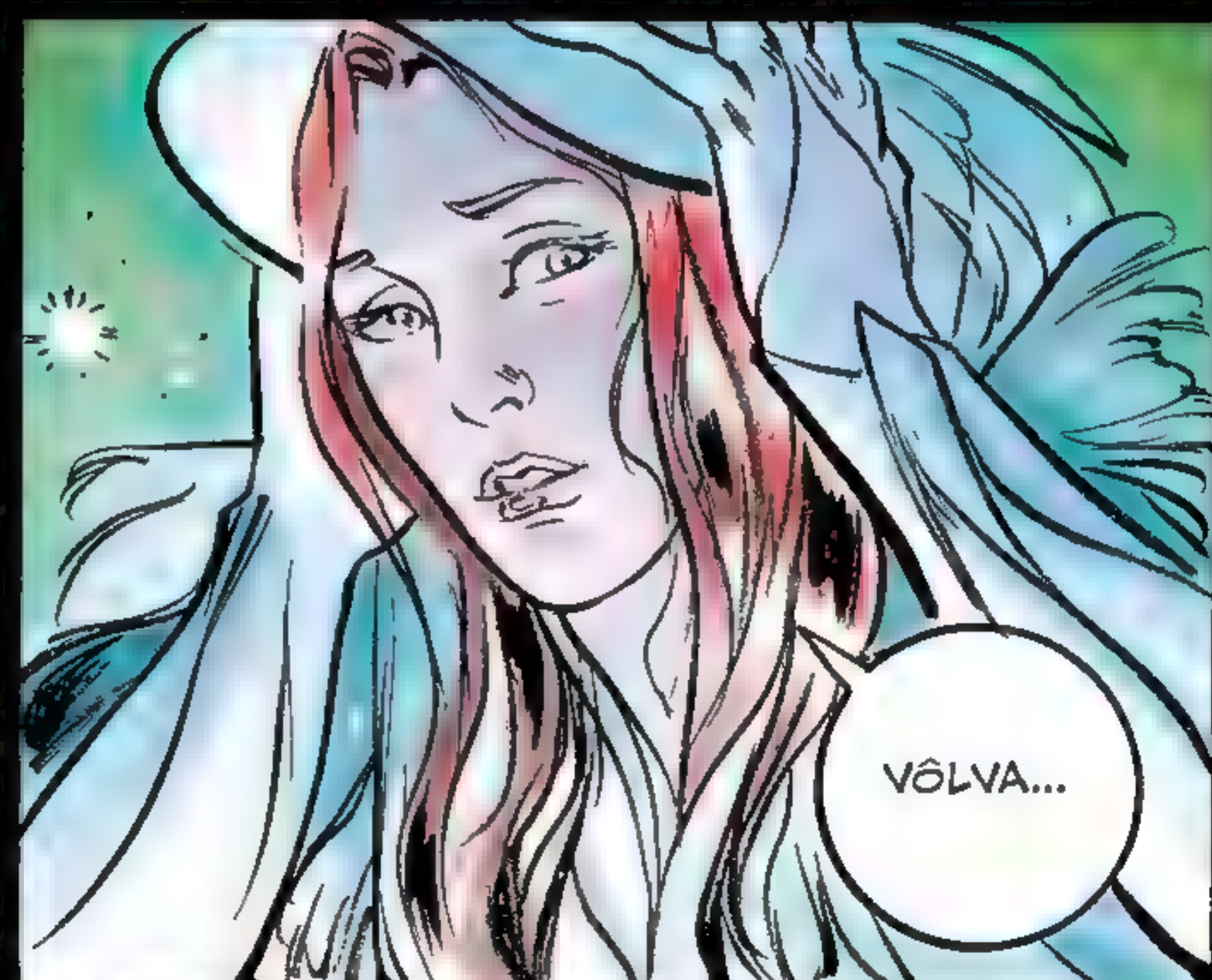
HE IS GETTING
CLOSER...HE IS LOST
IN THE SWAMP, BUT
HE WILL SOON FIND
THIS PLACE.

YES...IT'S THE
PRESENT AND HE JUST
LEFT THE FORGE...
HIS DESTINY IS STILL
AHEAD OF HIM.

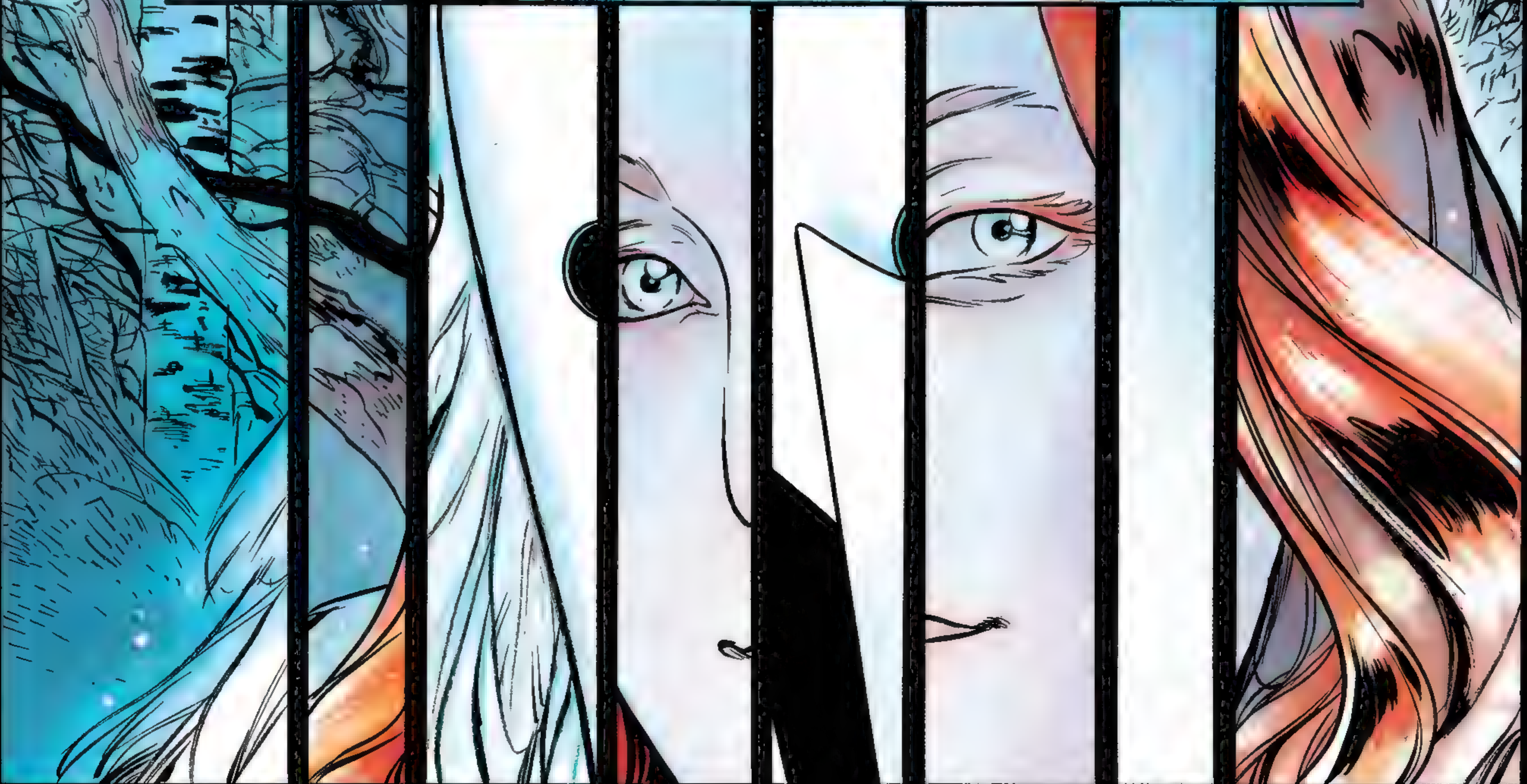
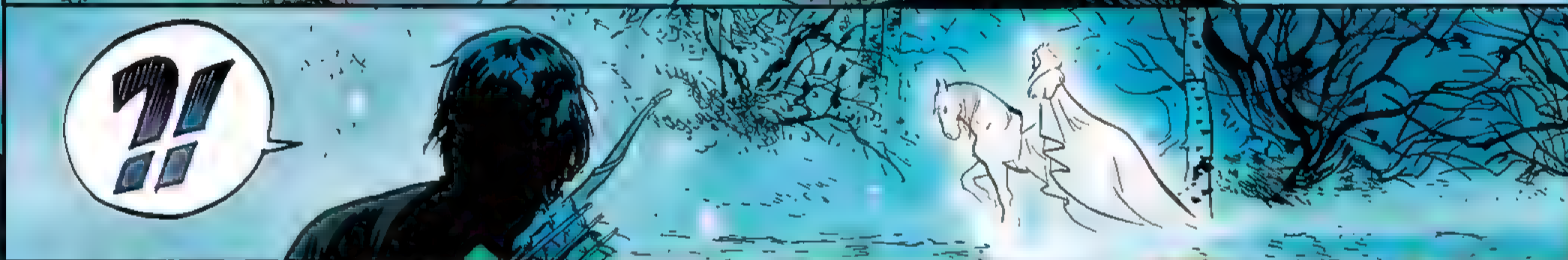
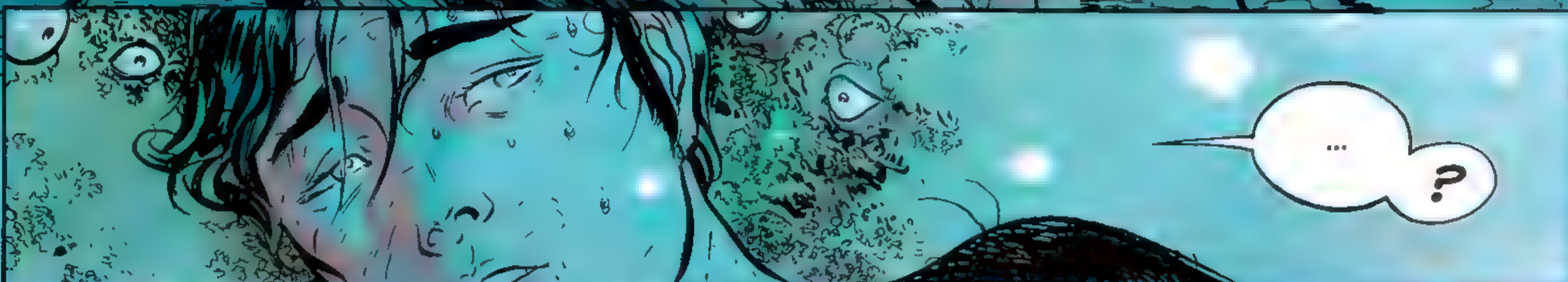
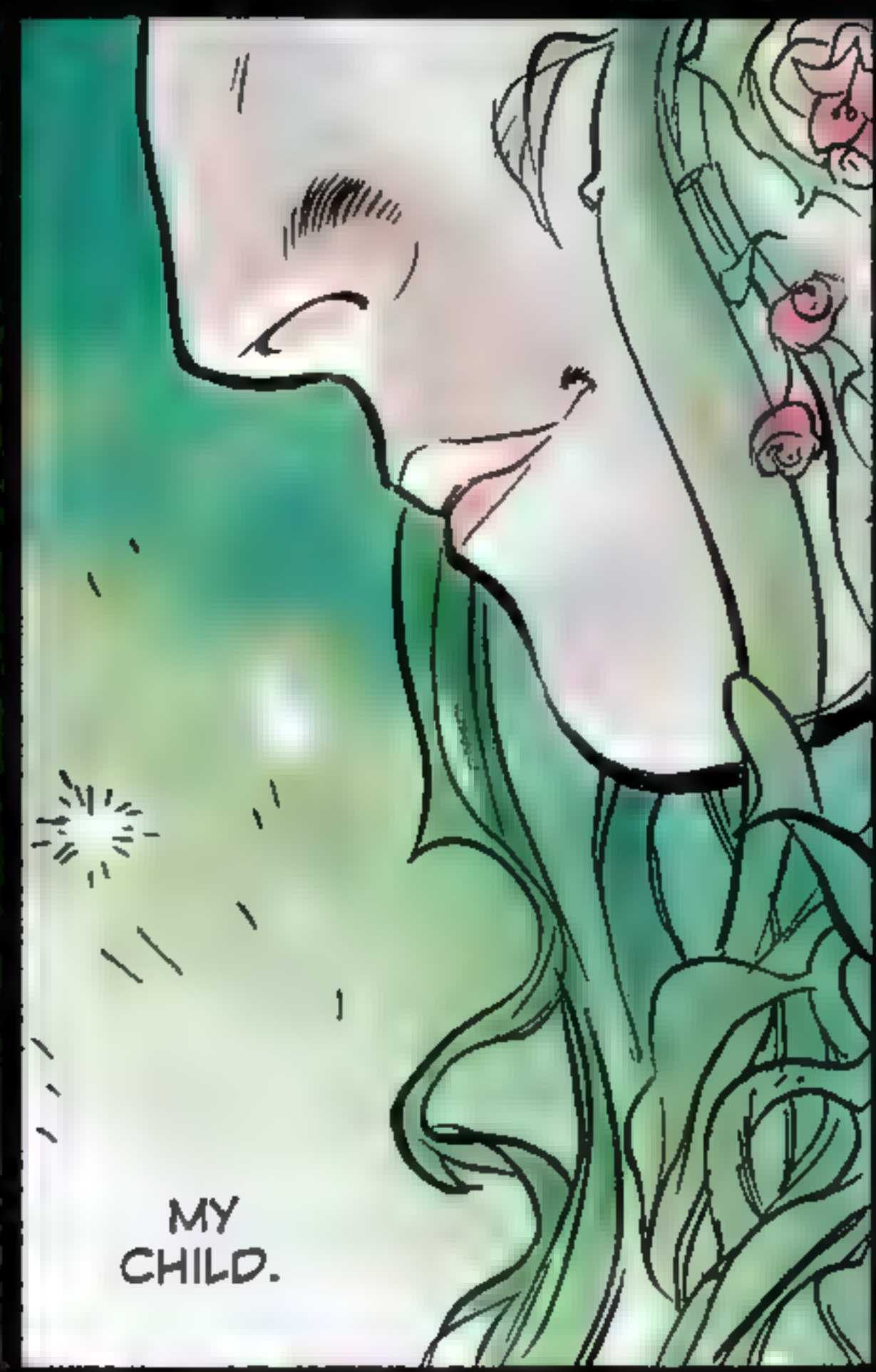
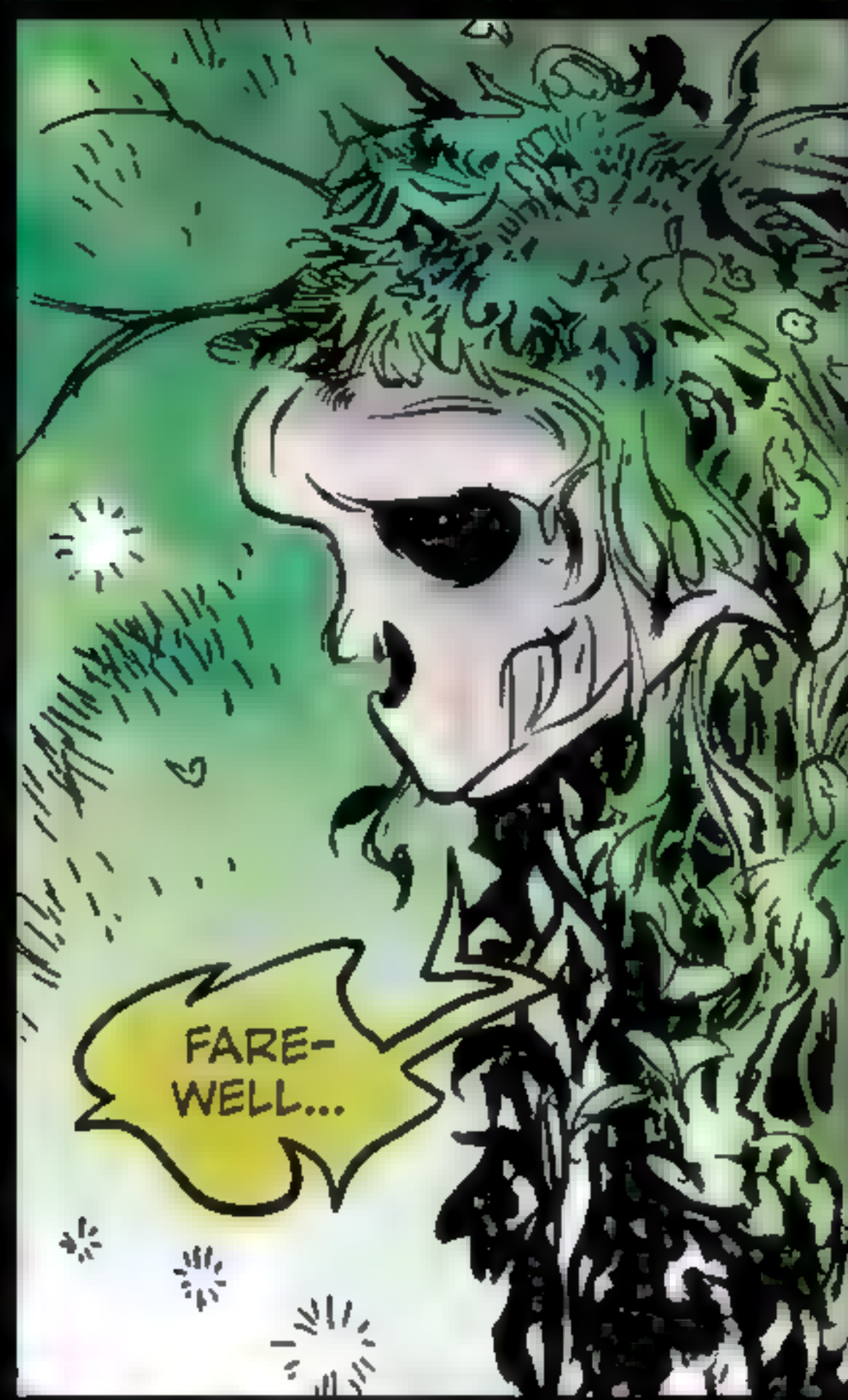
MINE IS
COMING TO
AN END.



HERE, YOU KNOW
WHAT YOU HAVE
TO DO...

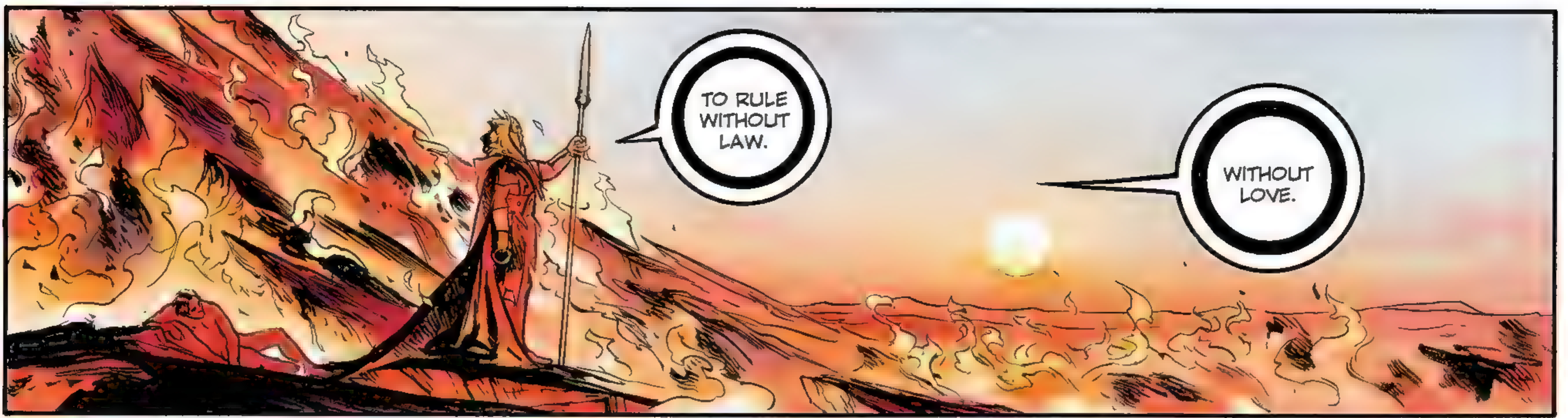


VÖLVA...



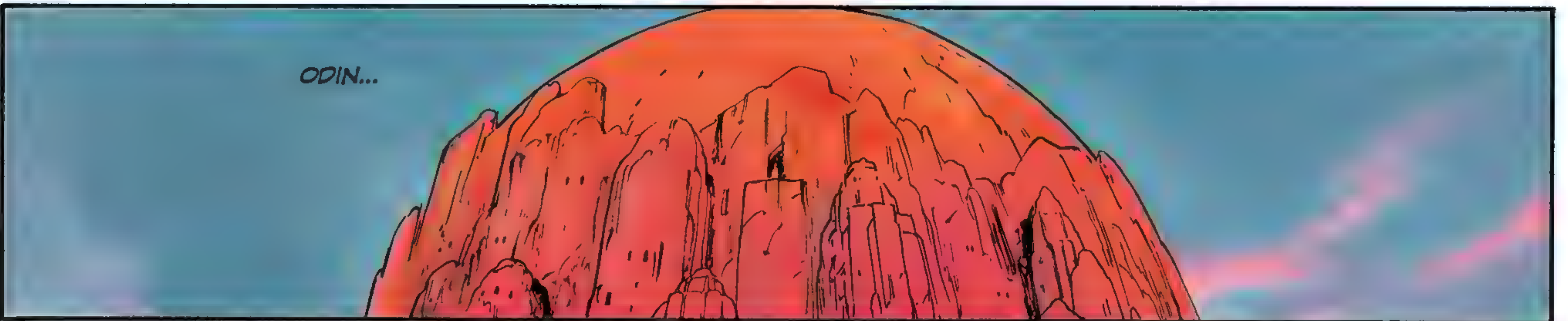




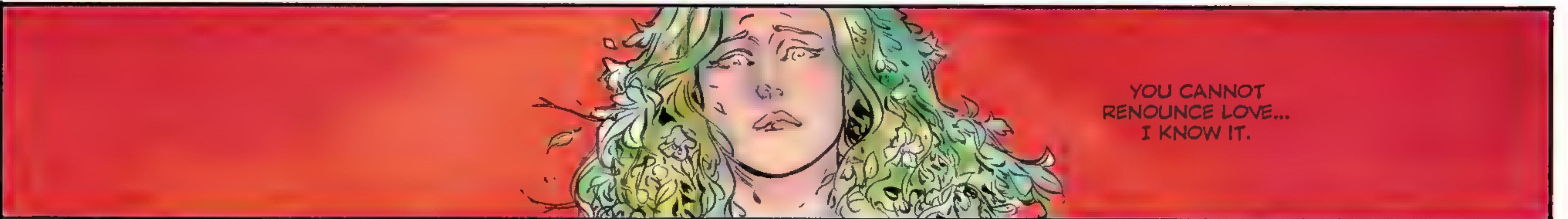


TO RULE
WITHOUT
LAW.

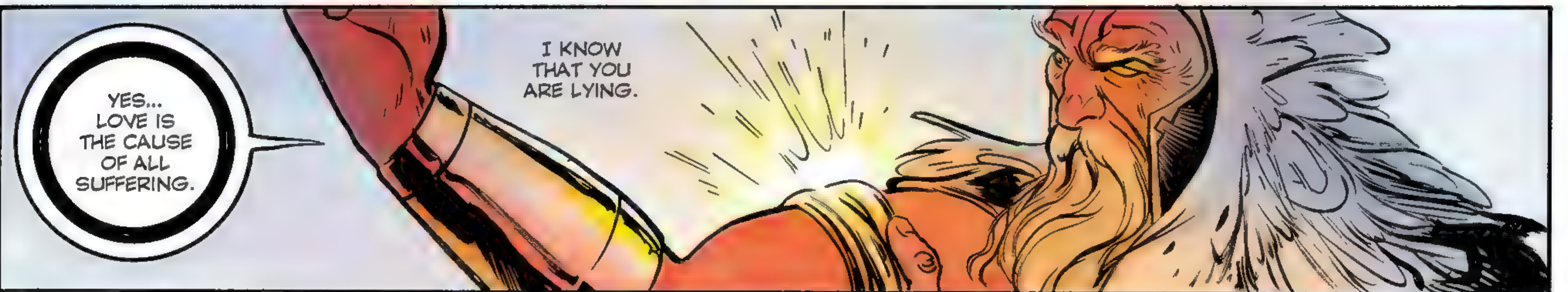
WITHOUT
LOVE.



ODIN...

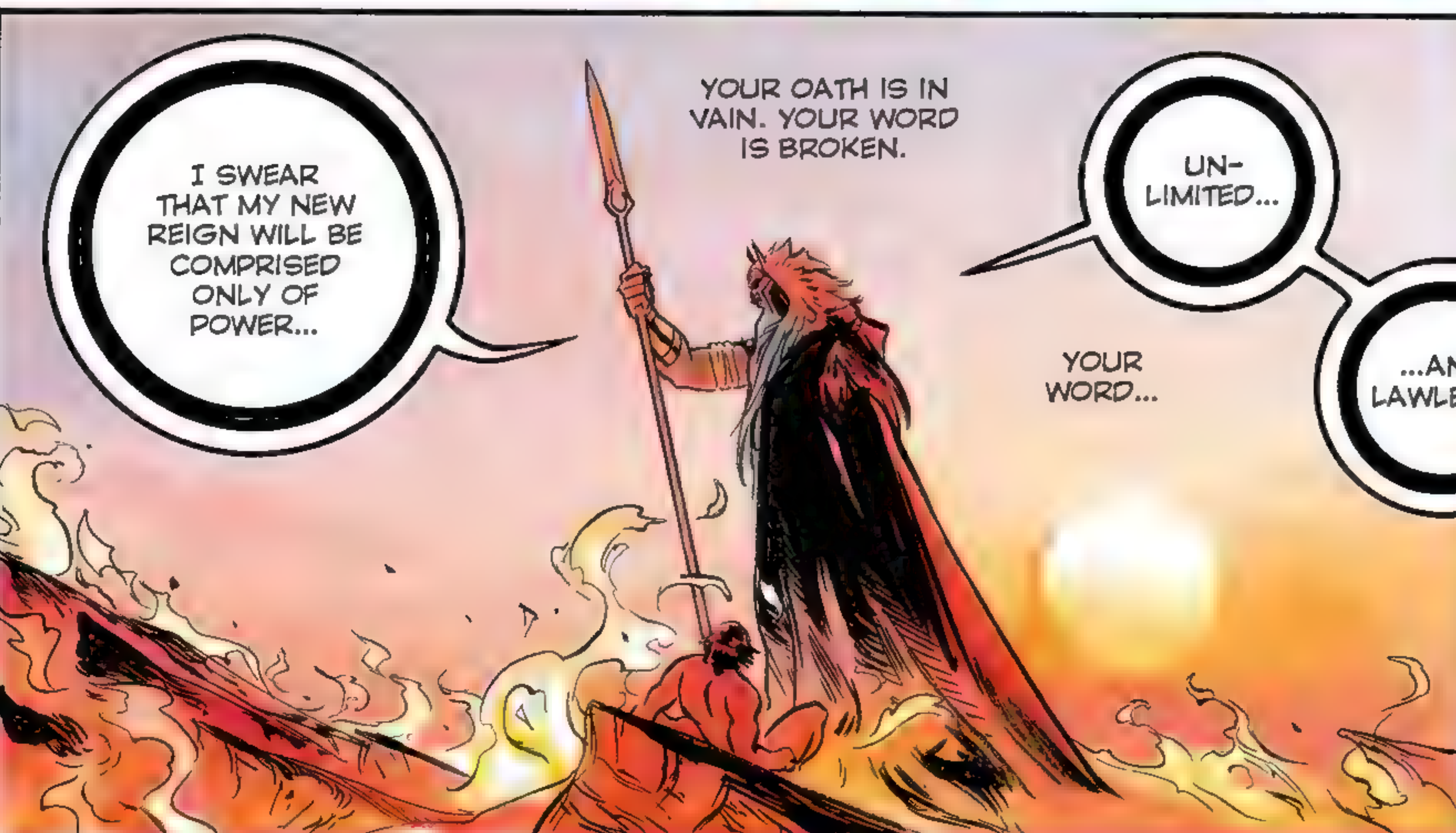


YOU CANNOT
RENOUCE LOVE...
I KNOW IT.



YES...
LOVE IS
THE CAUSE
OF ALL
SUFFERING.

I KNOW
THAT YOU
ARE LYING.



I SWEAR
THAT MY NEW
REIGN WILL BE
COMPRISED
ONLY OF
POWER...

YOUR OATH IS IN
VAIN. YOUR WORD
IS BROKEN.

UN-
LIMITED...

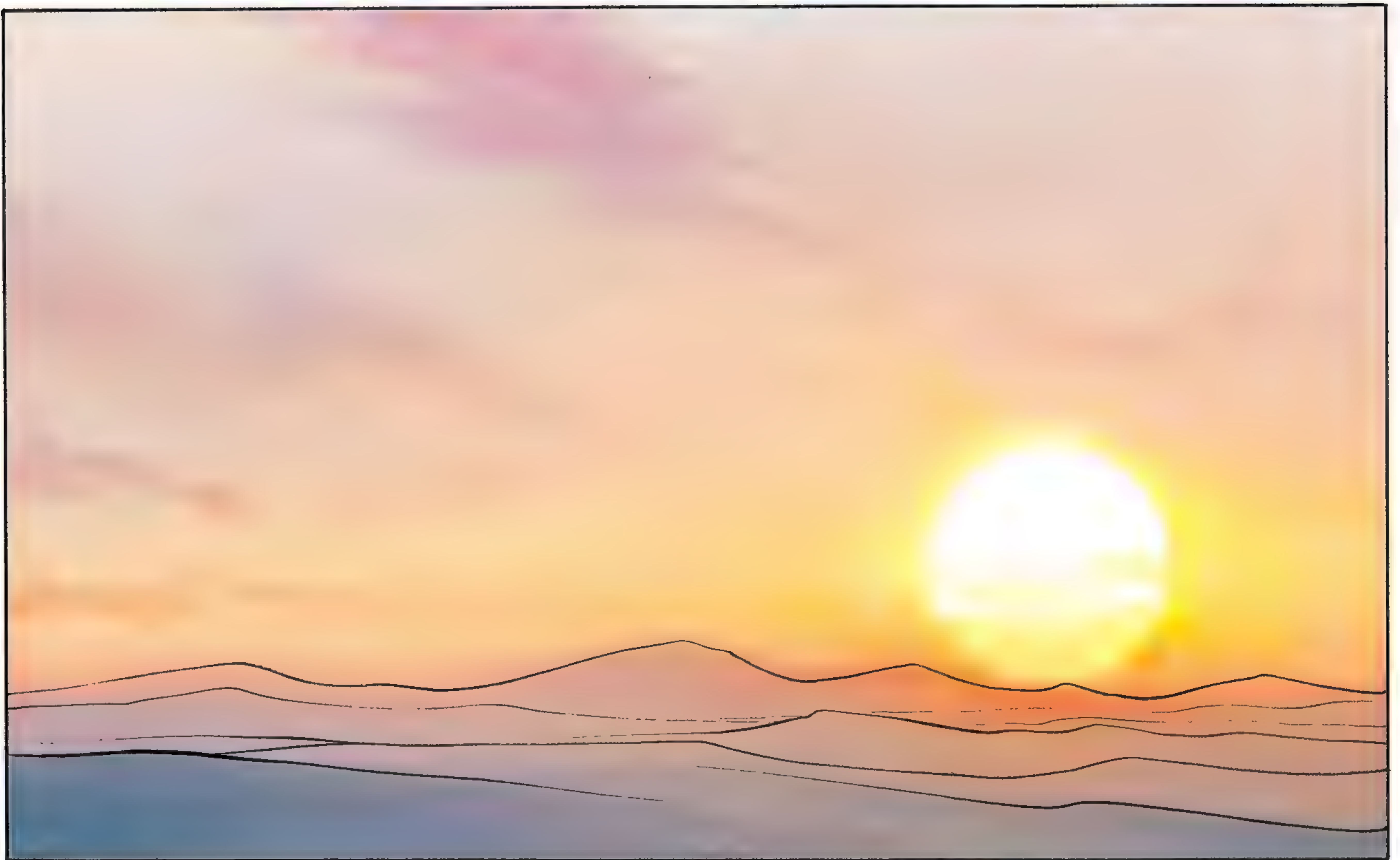
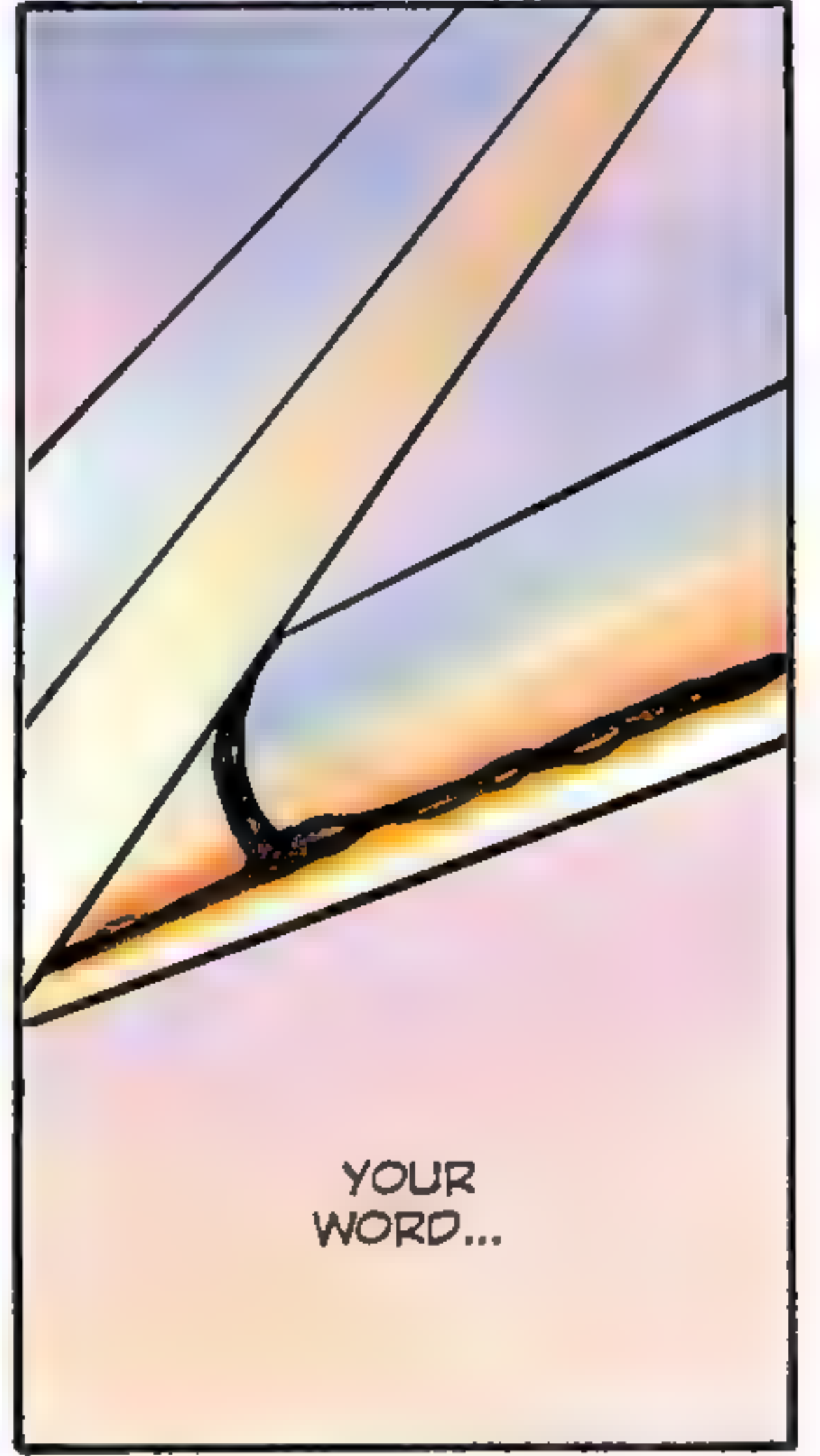
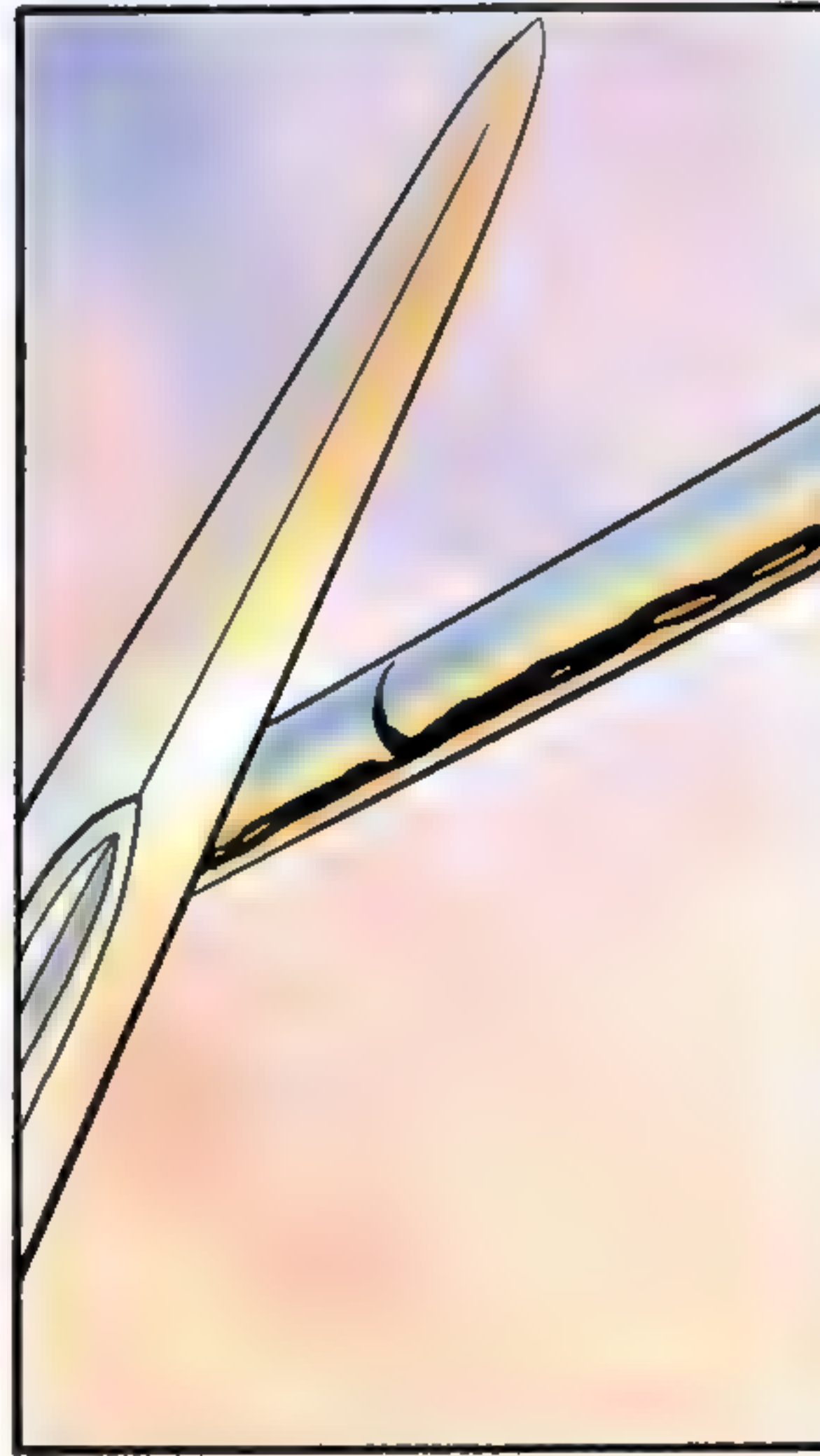
YOUR
WORD...

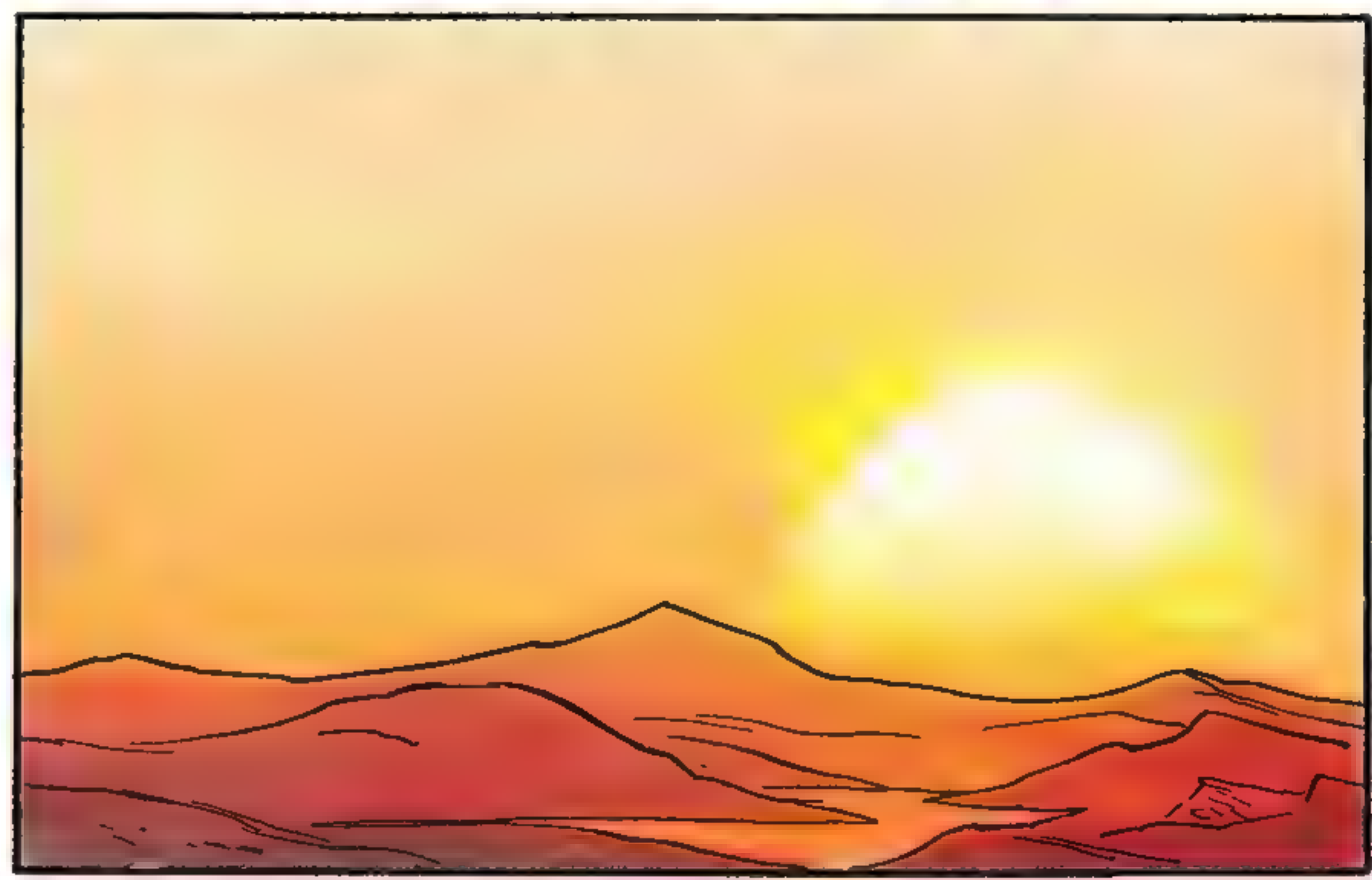
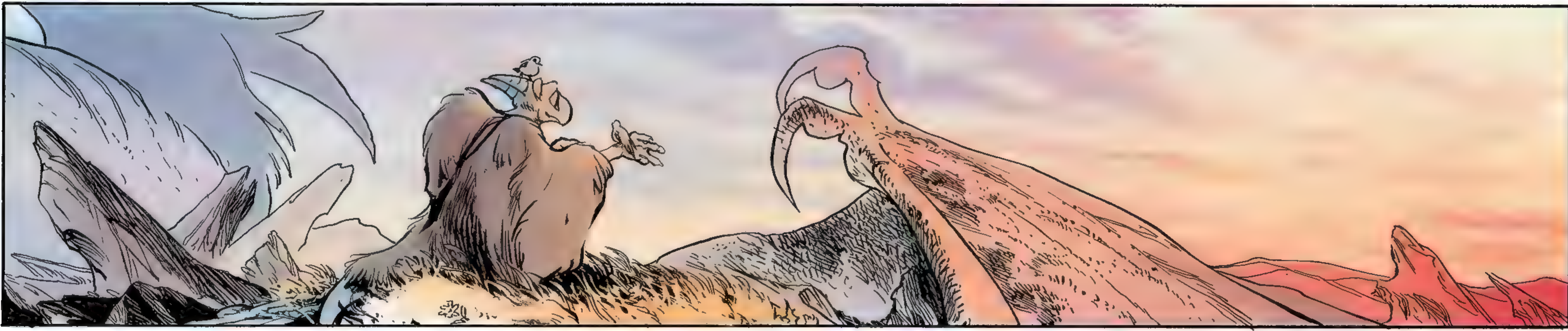
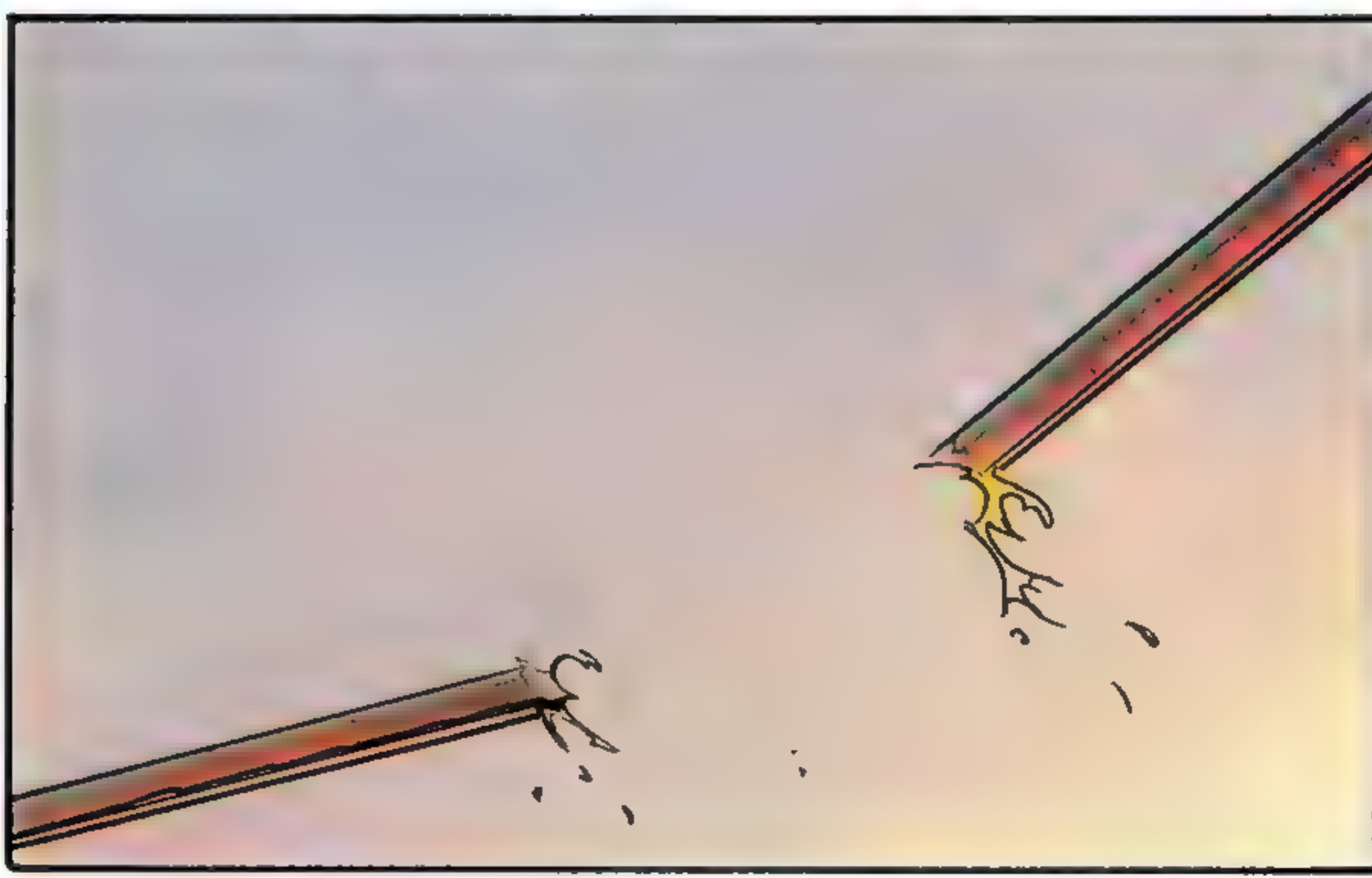
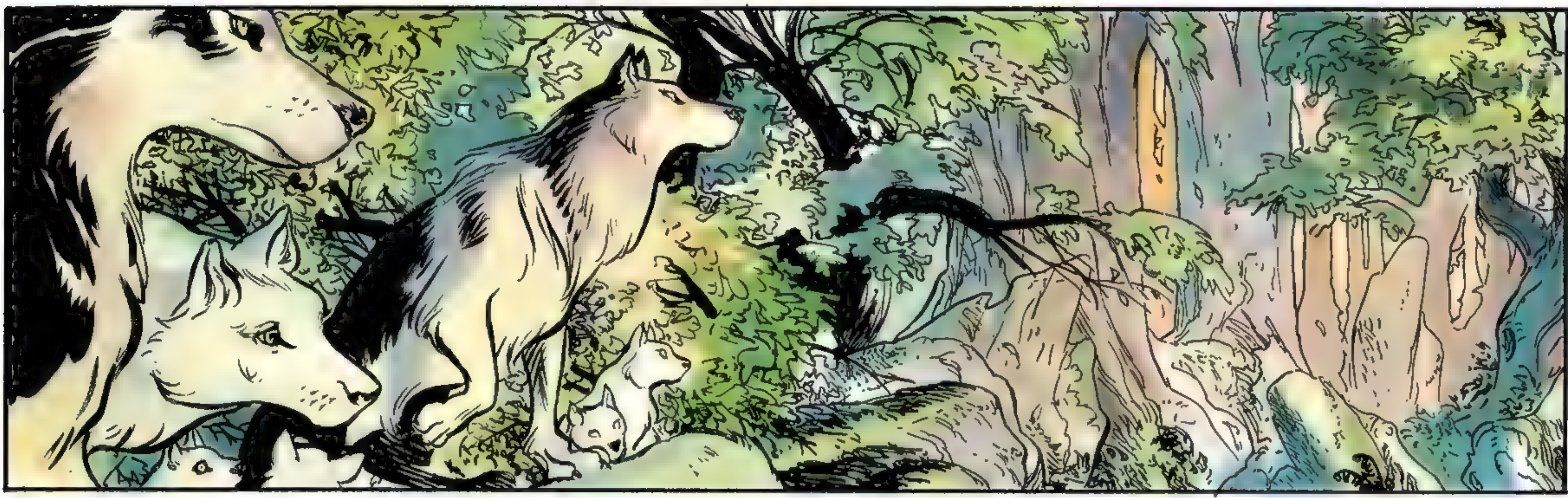
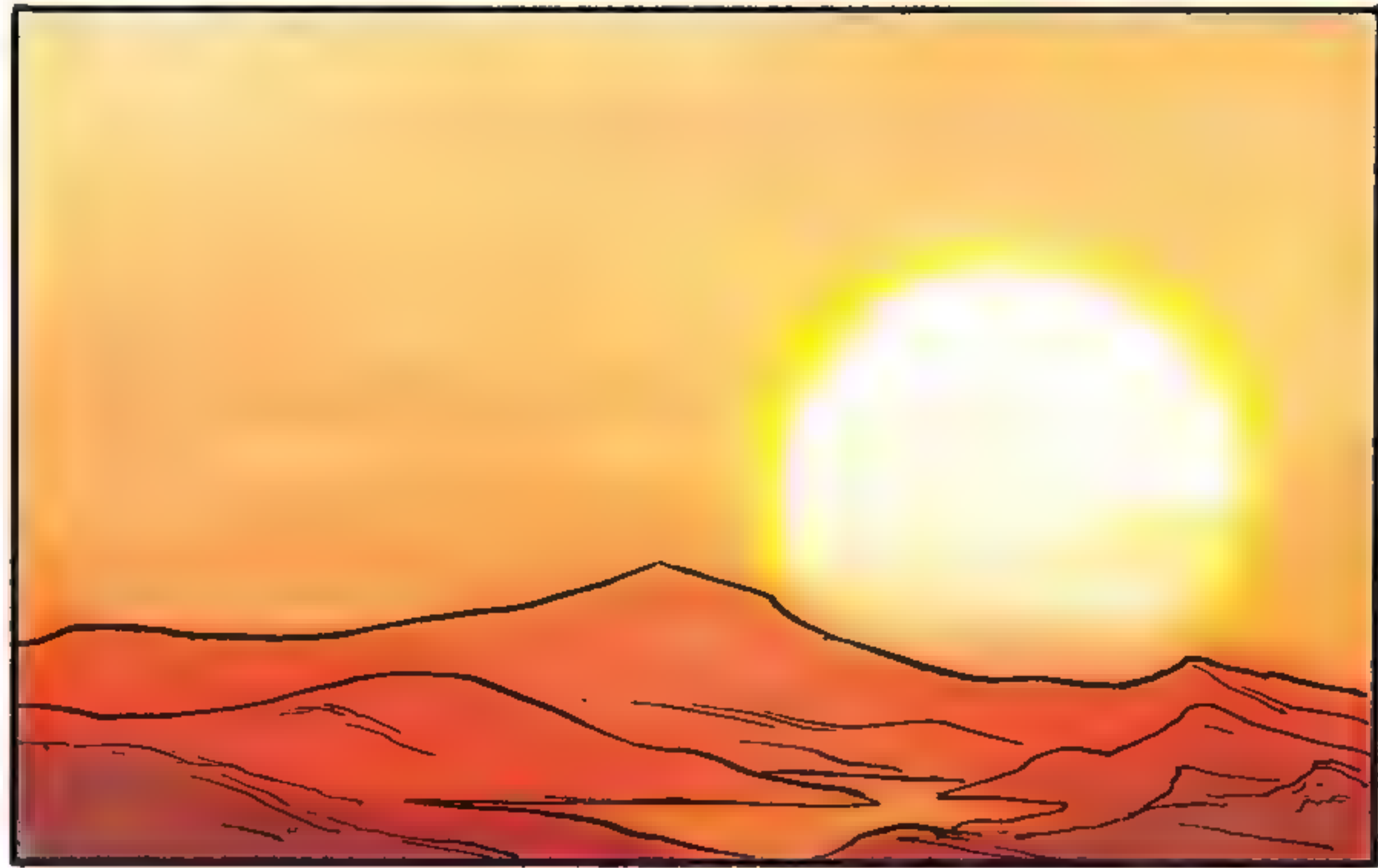
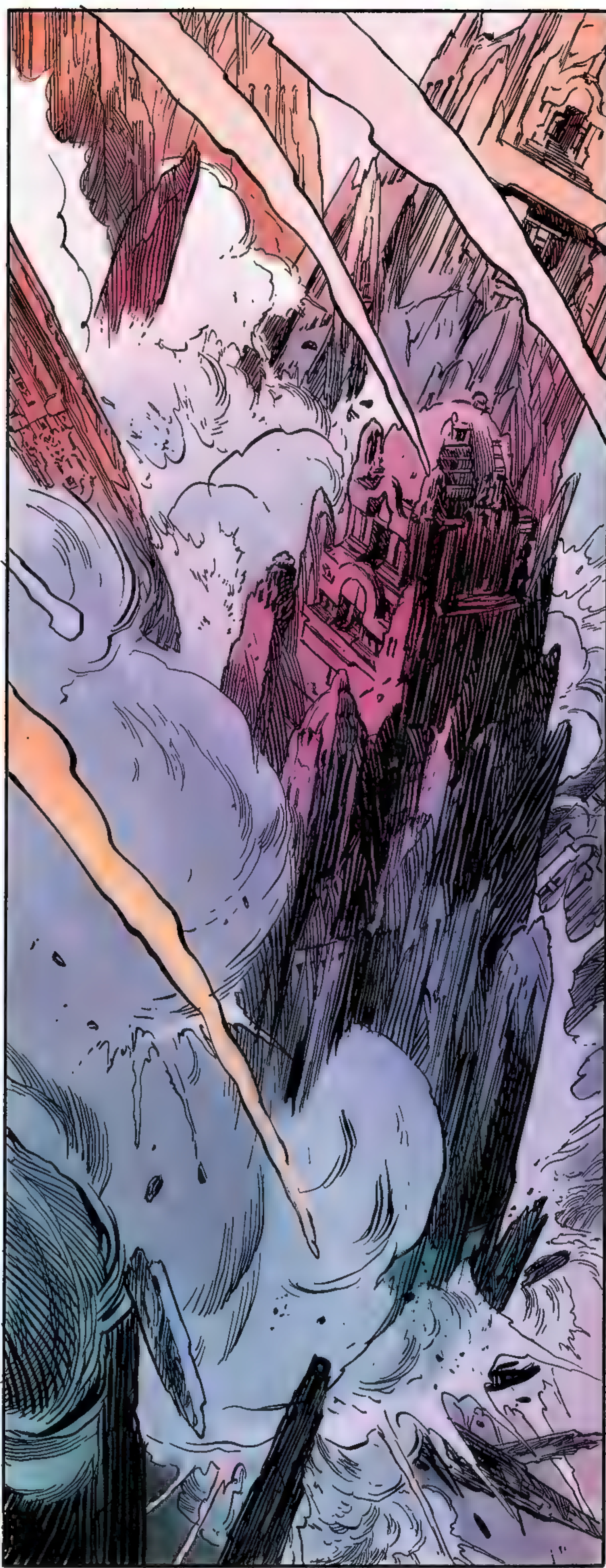
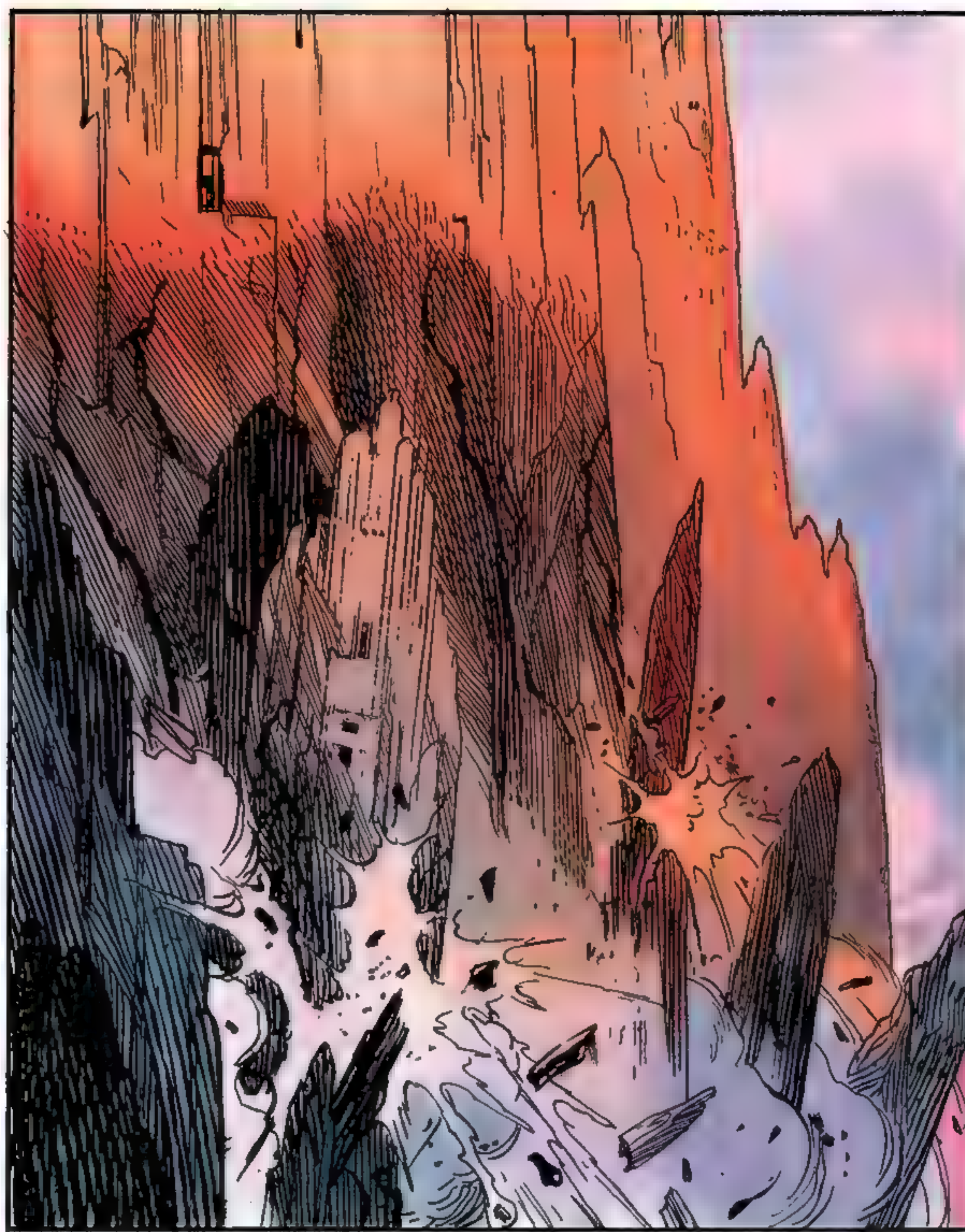
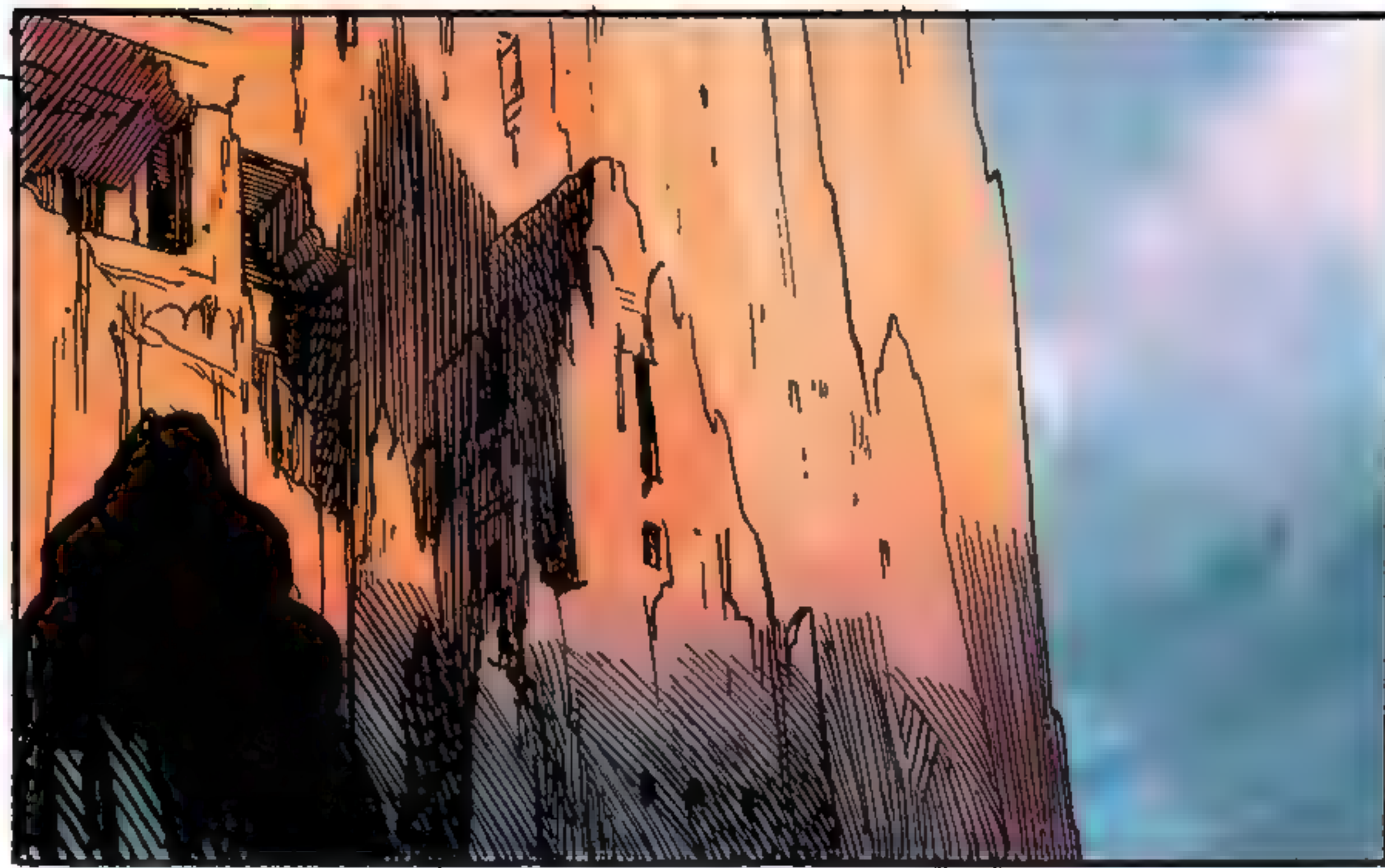
...AND
LAWLESS.



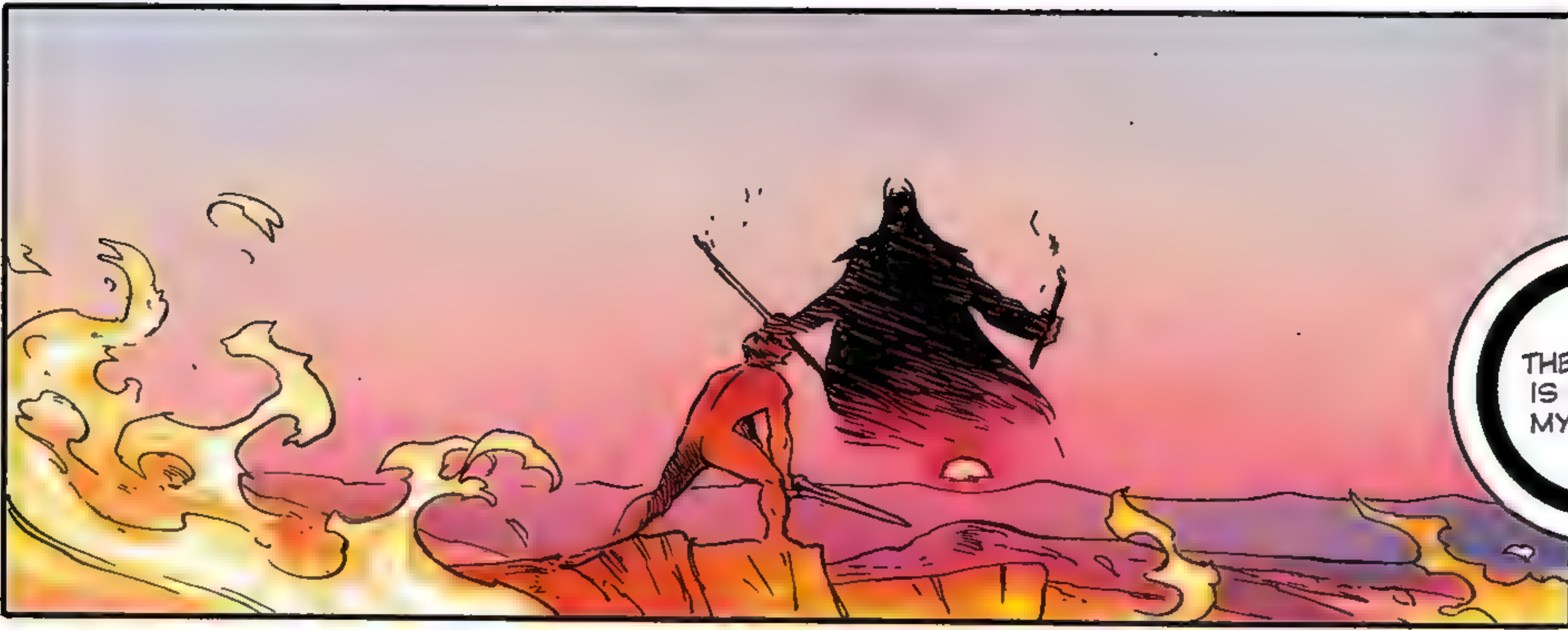
...IS
BROKEN.

FREE
HER...

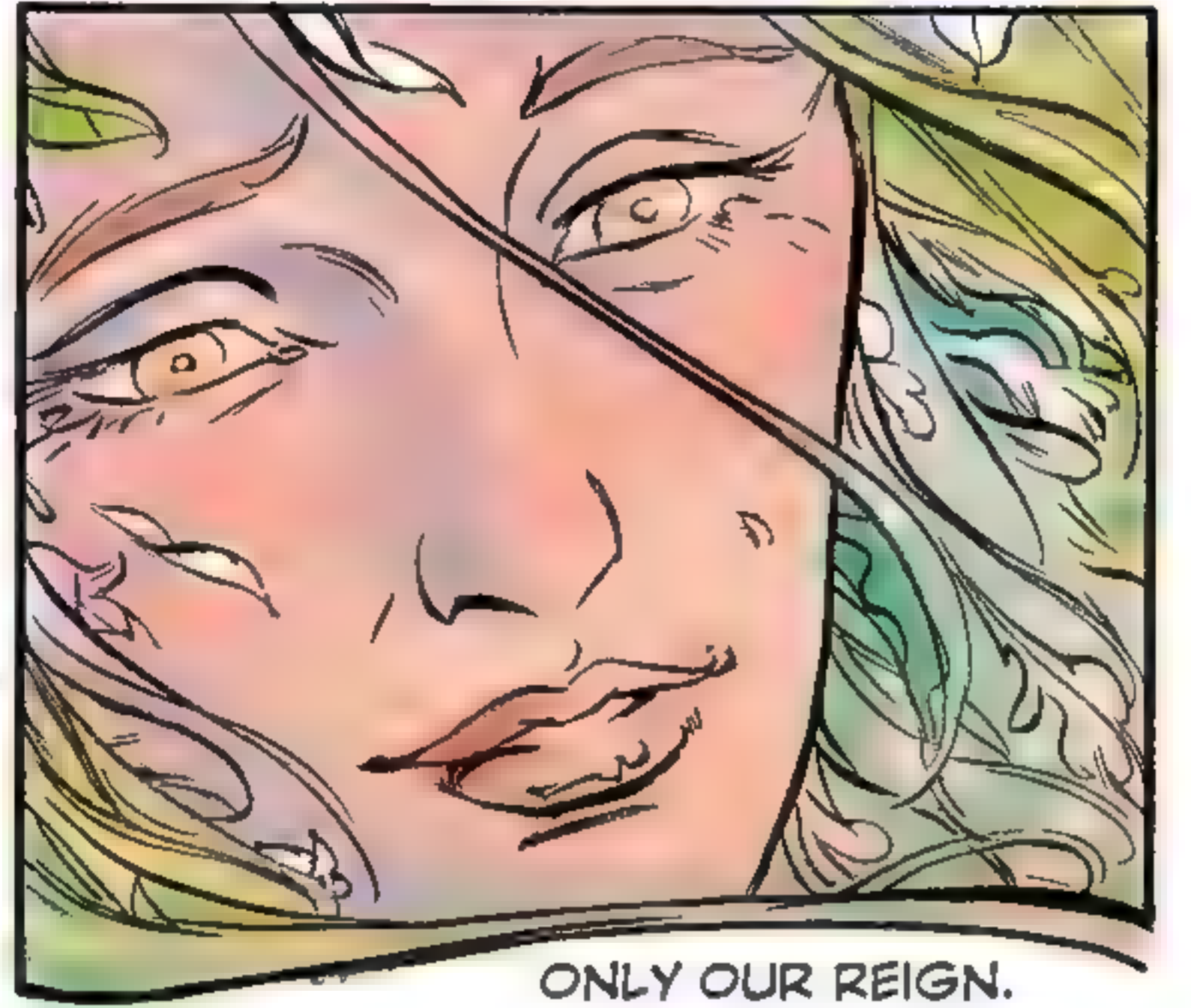




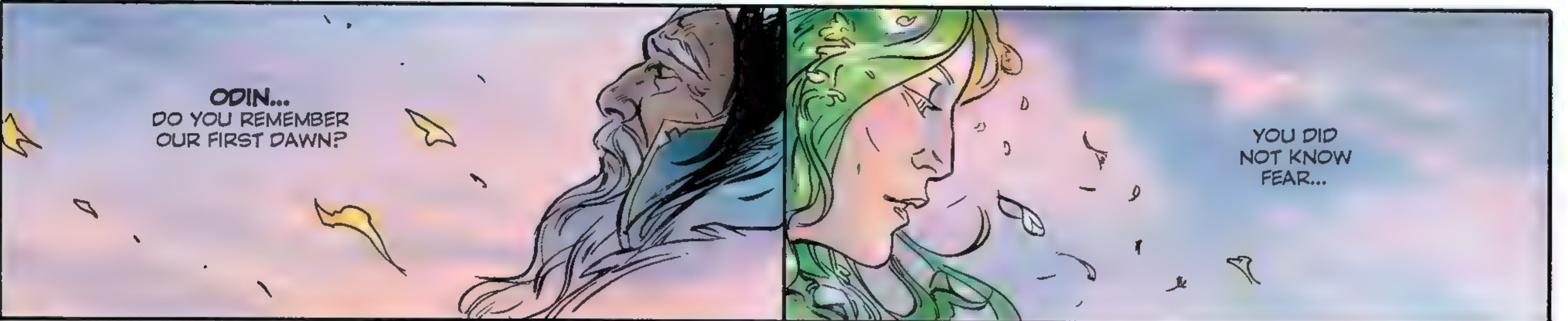




THE WORLD
IS ENDING
MY LOVE...

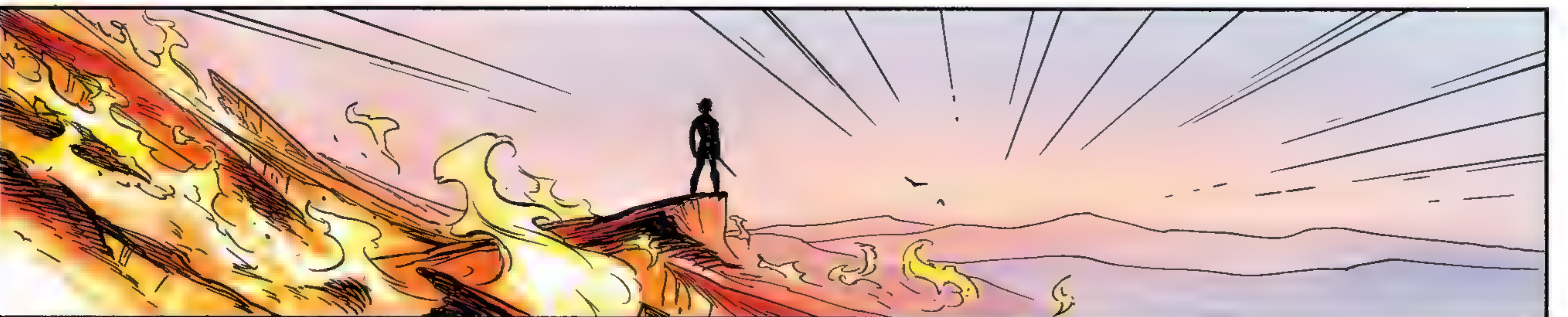
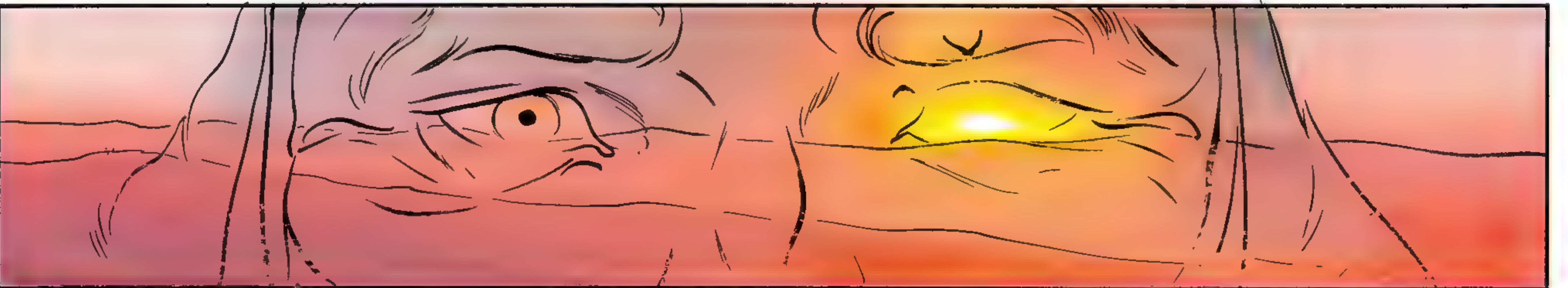
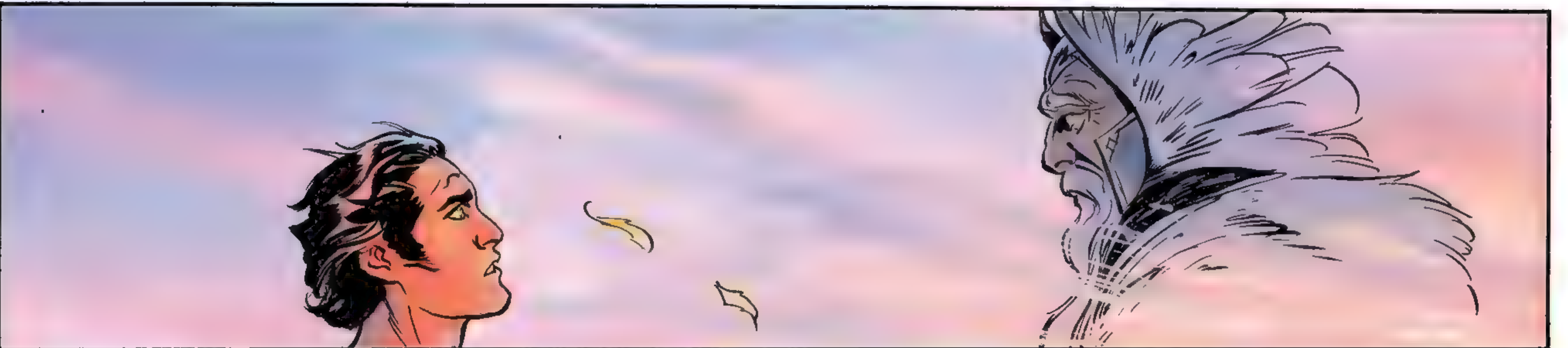


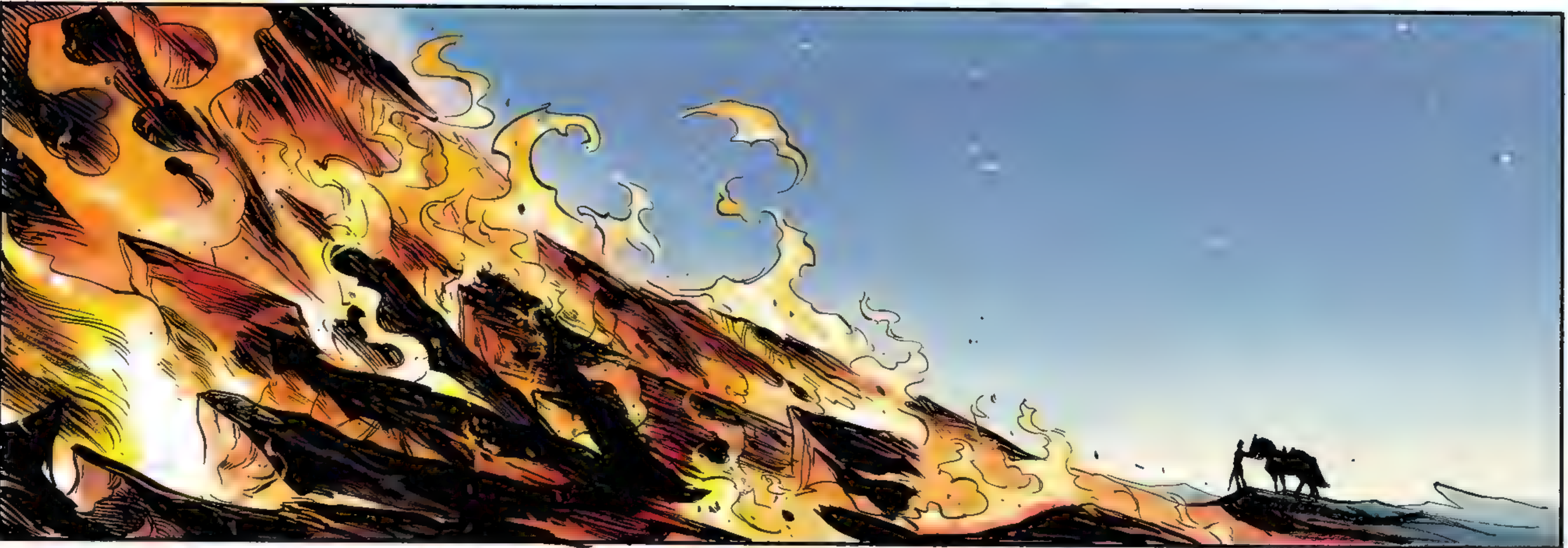
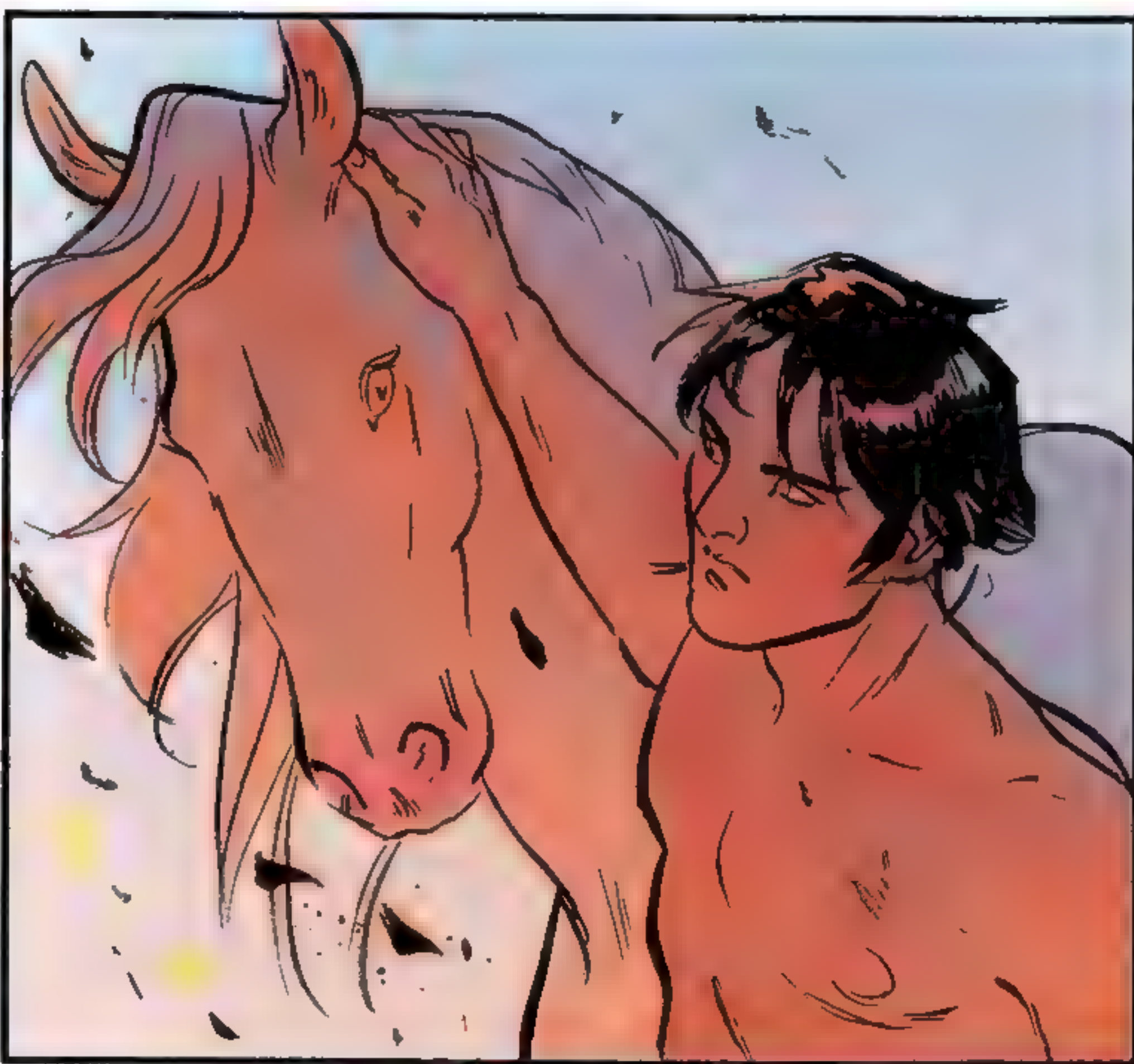
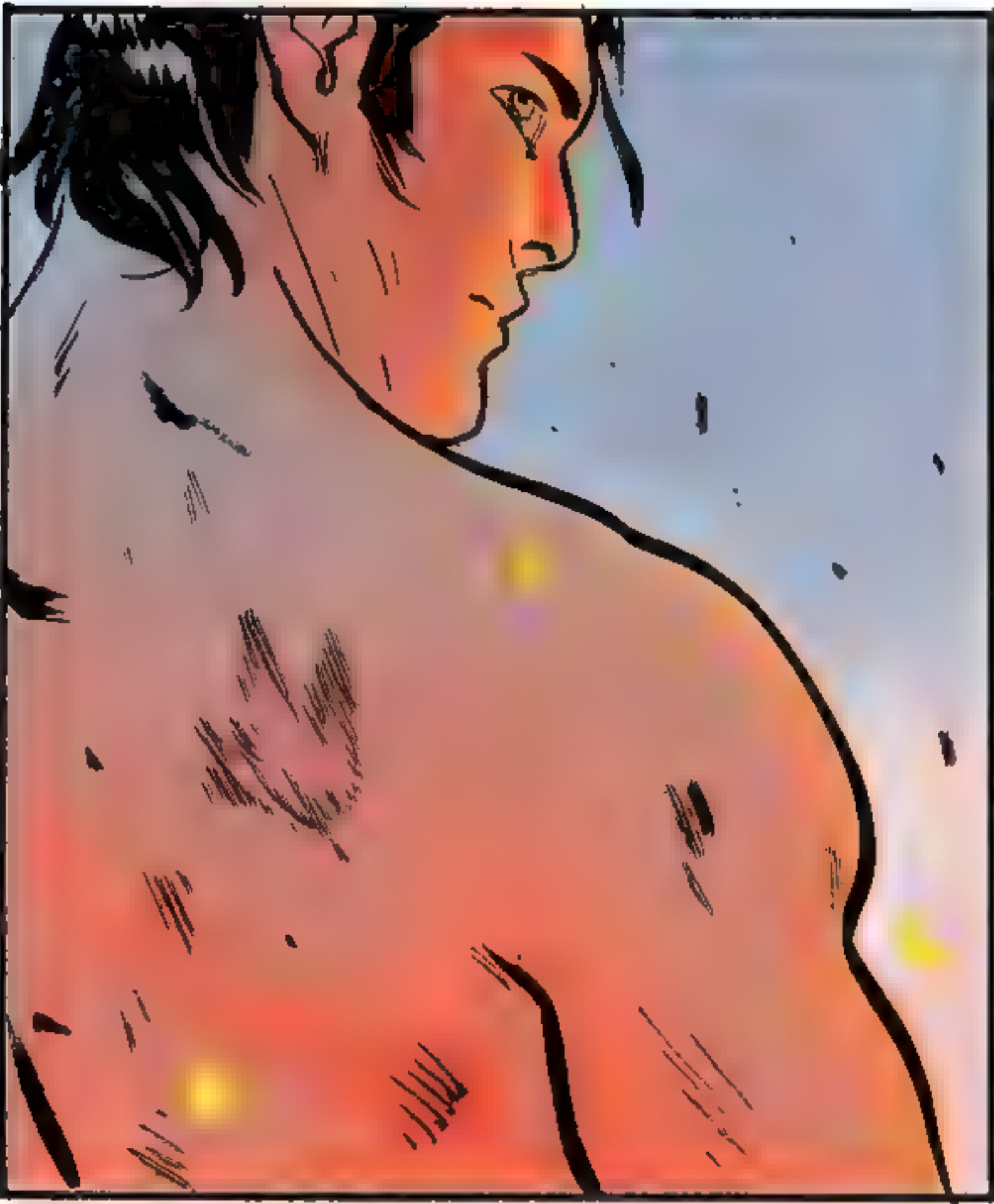
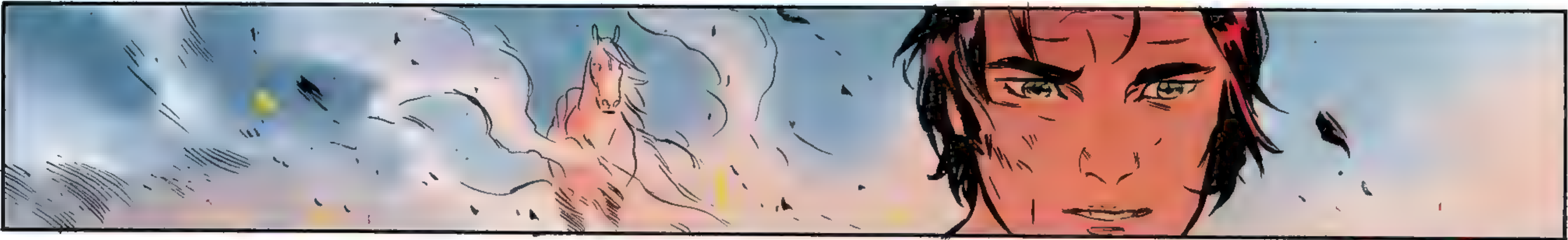
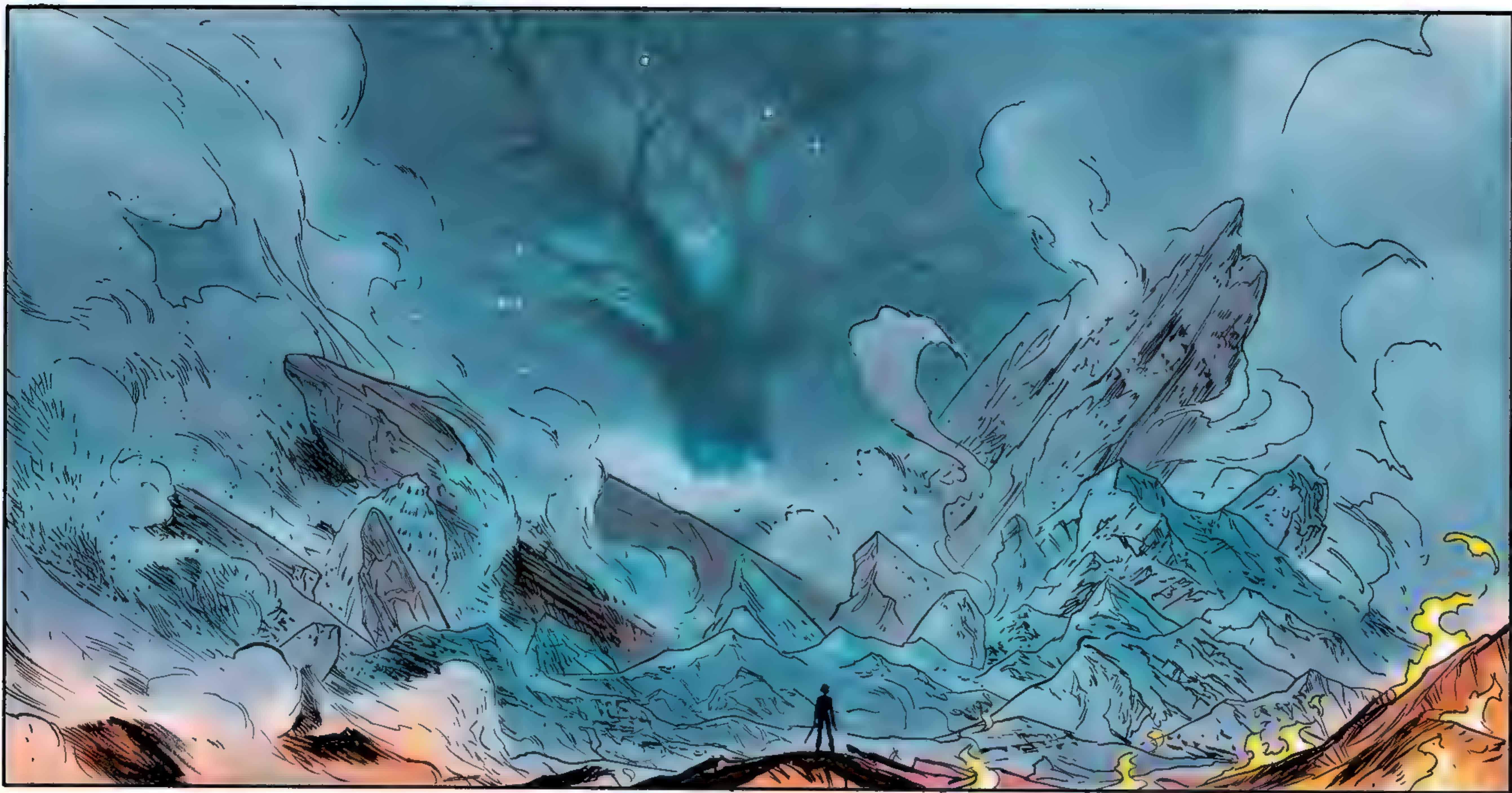
ONLY OUR REIGN.

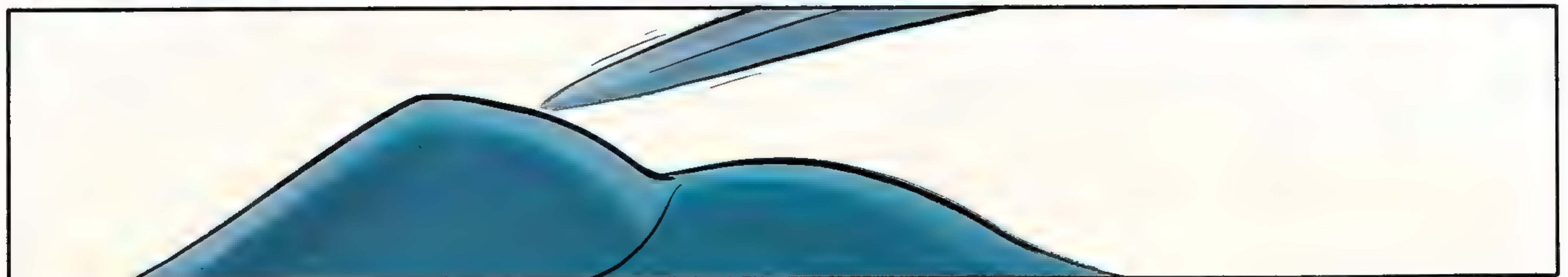
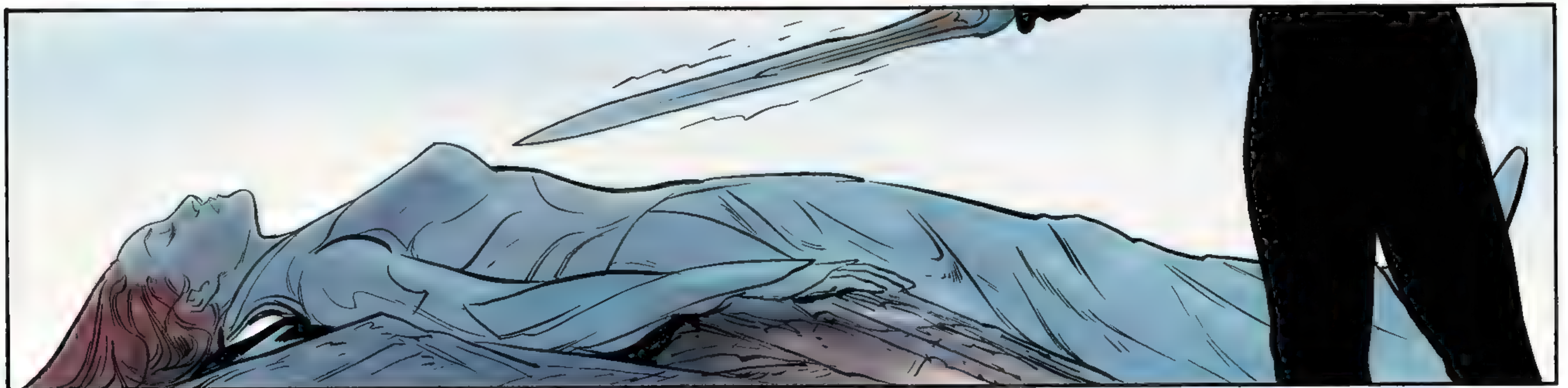
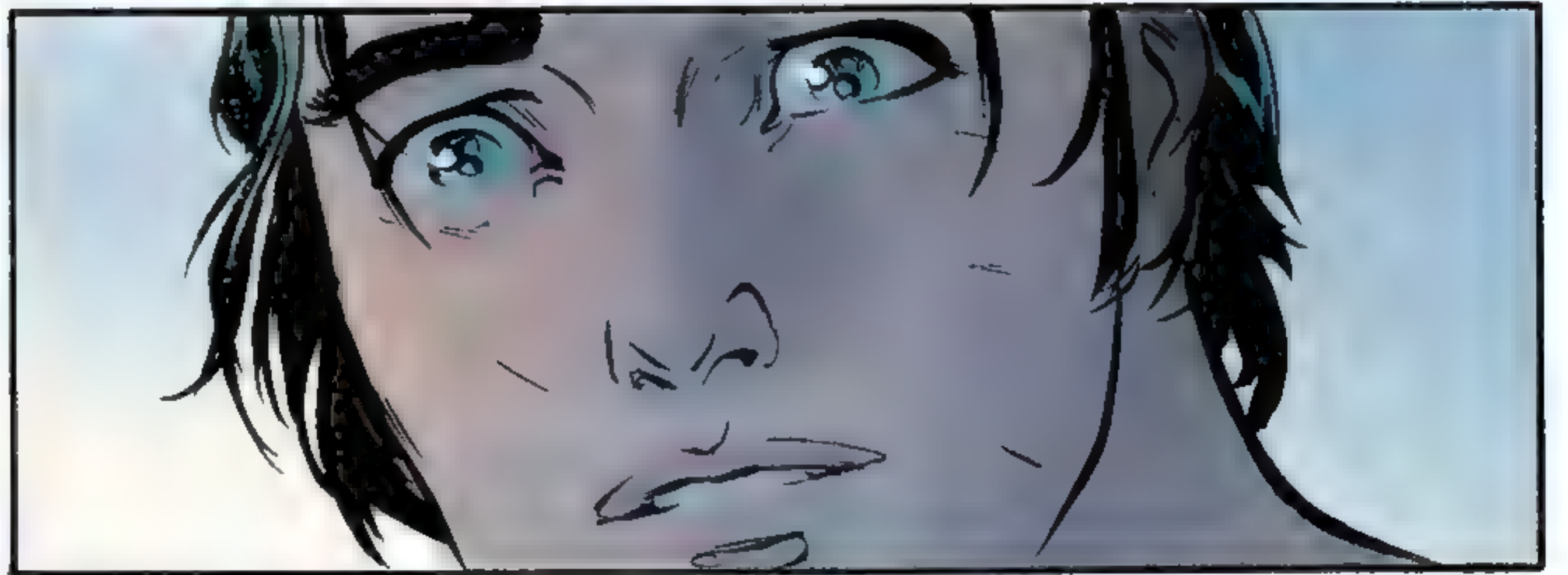
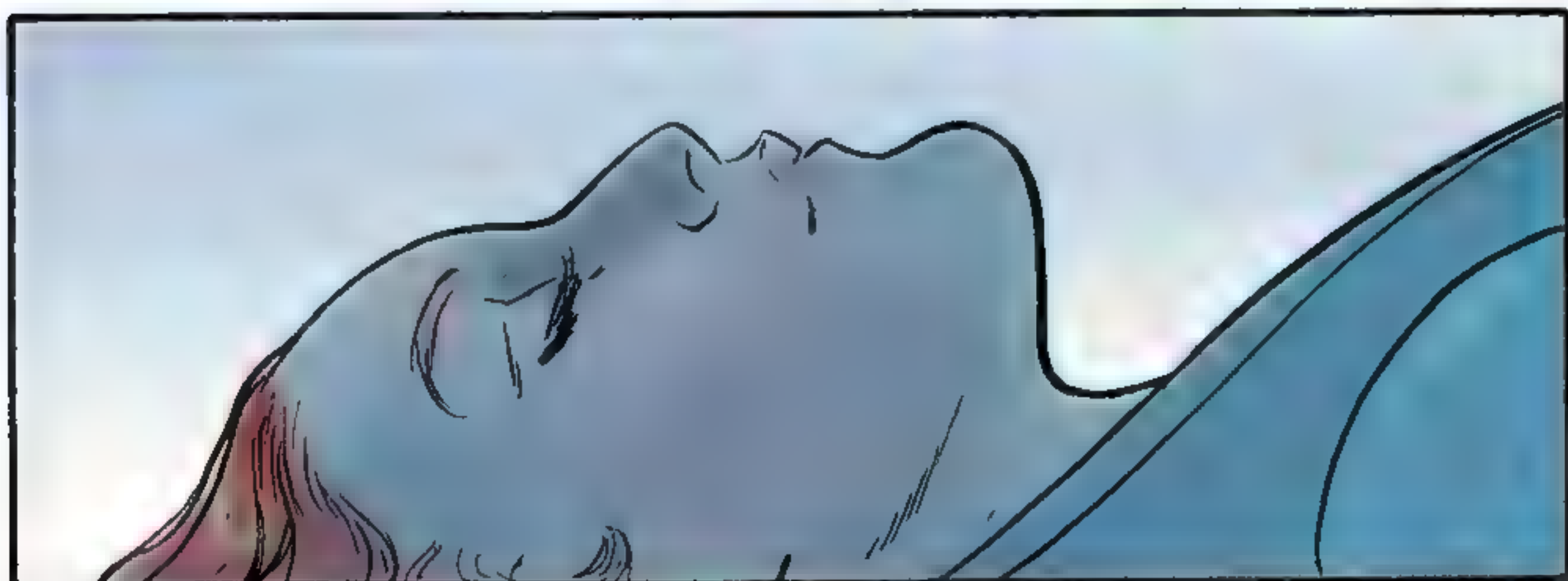
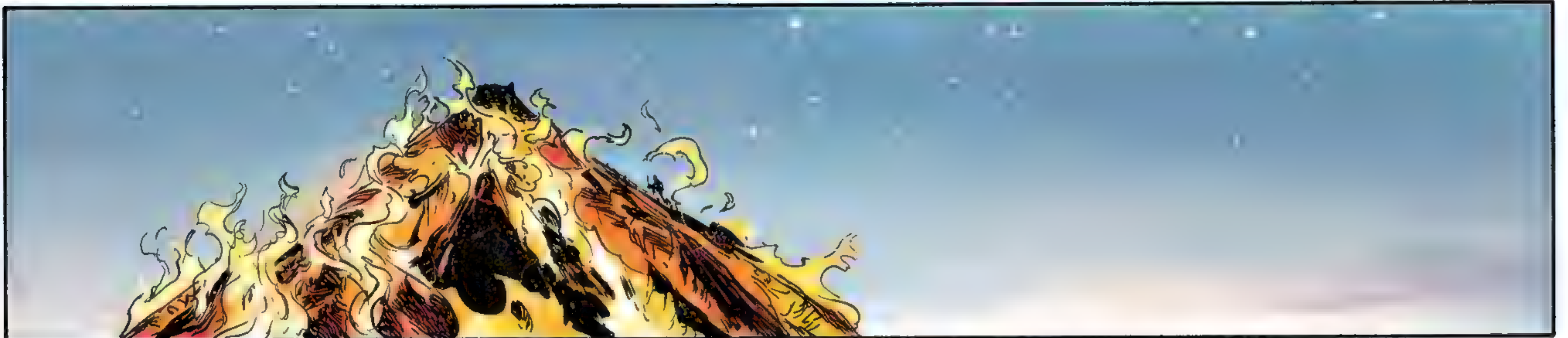
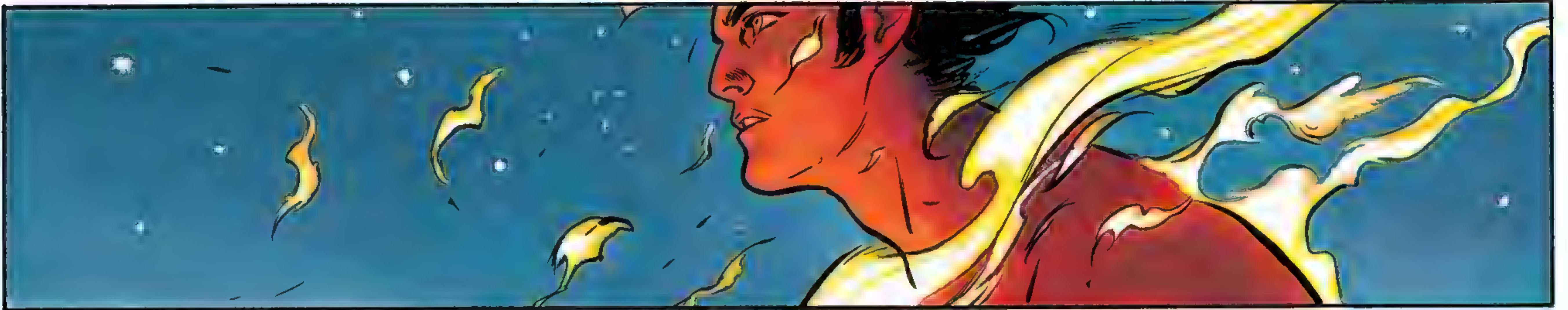
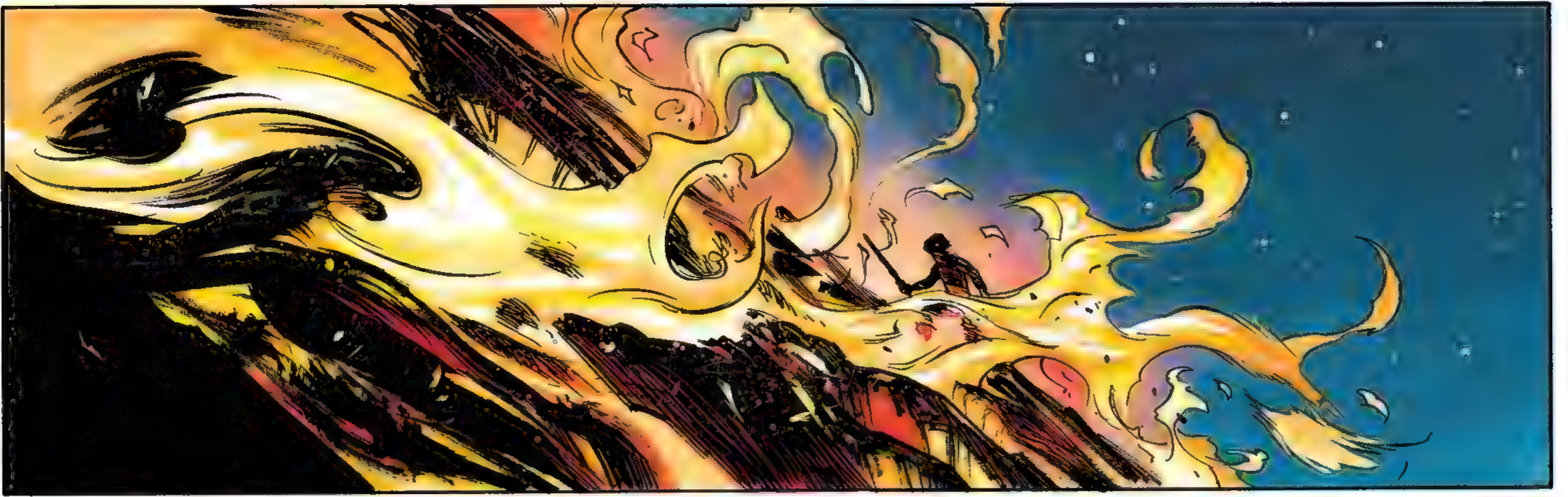


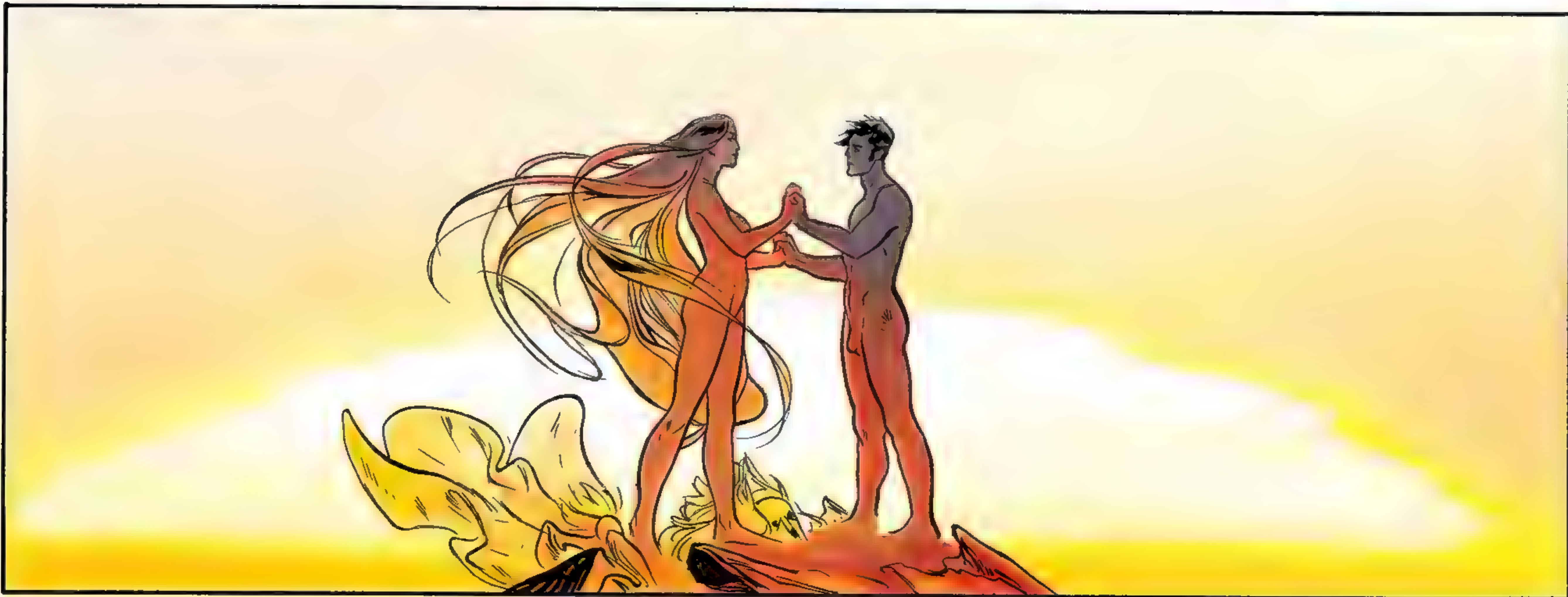
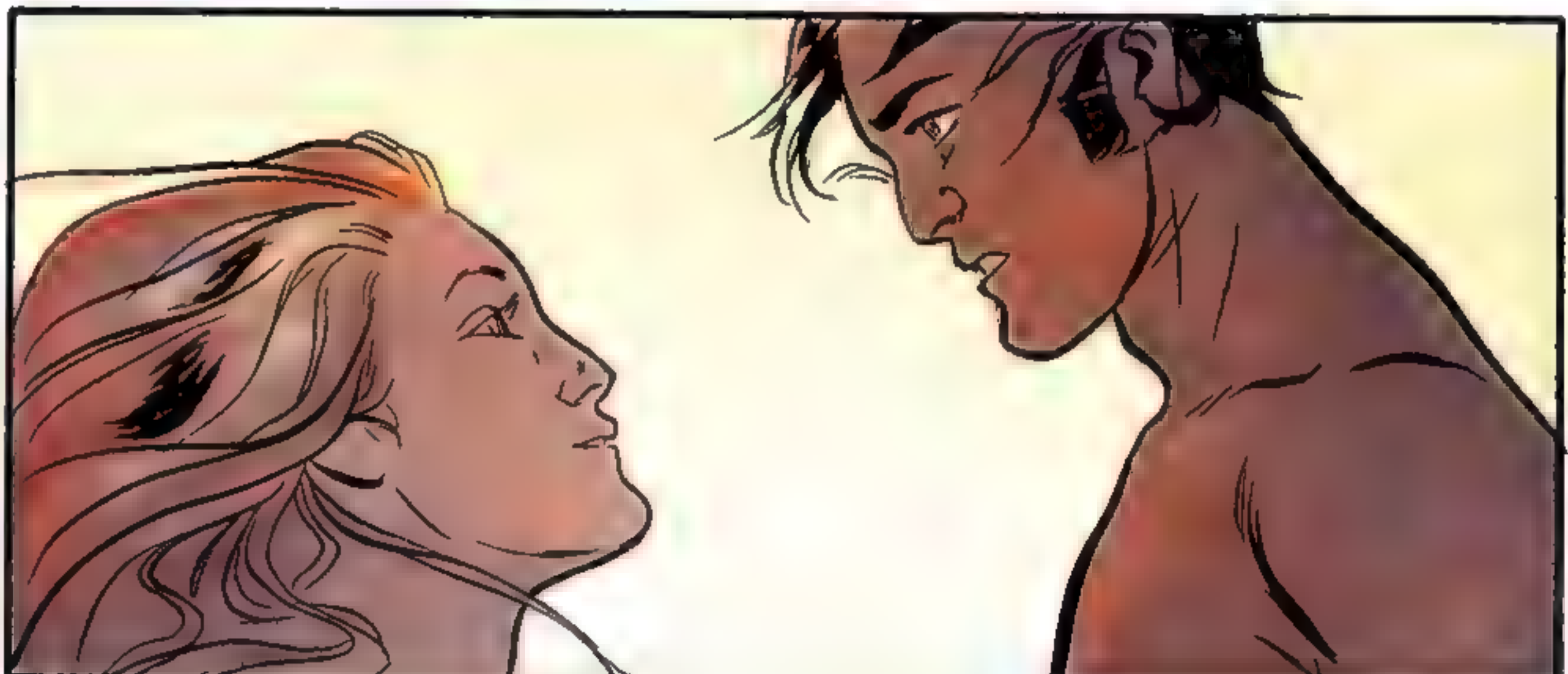
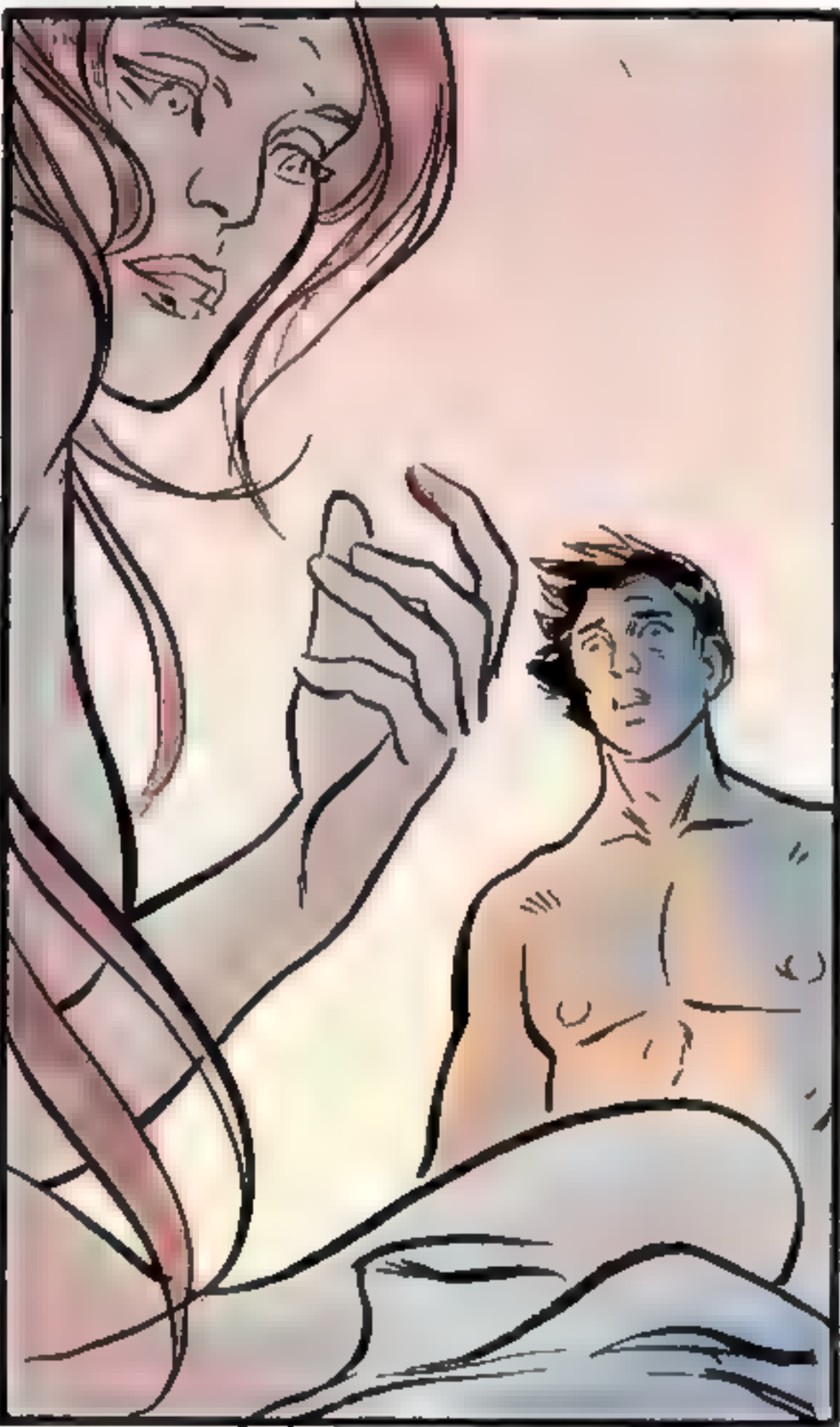
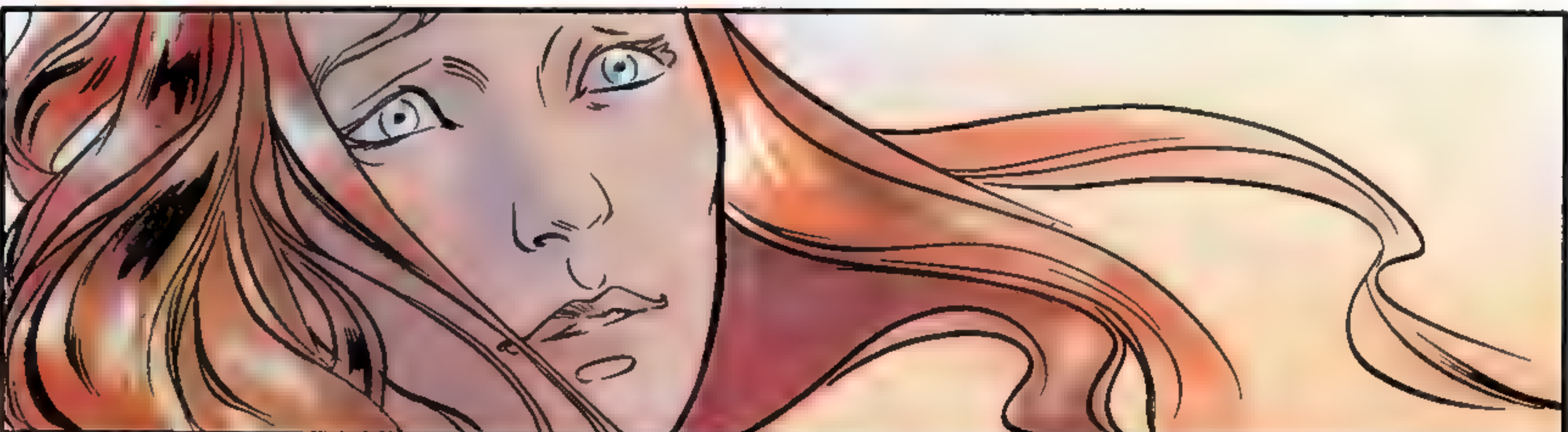
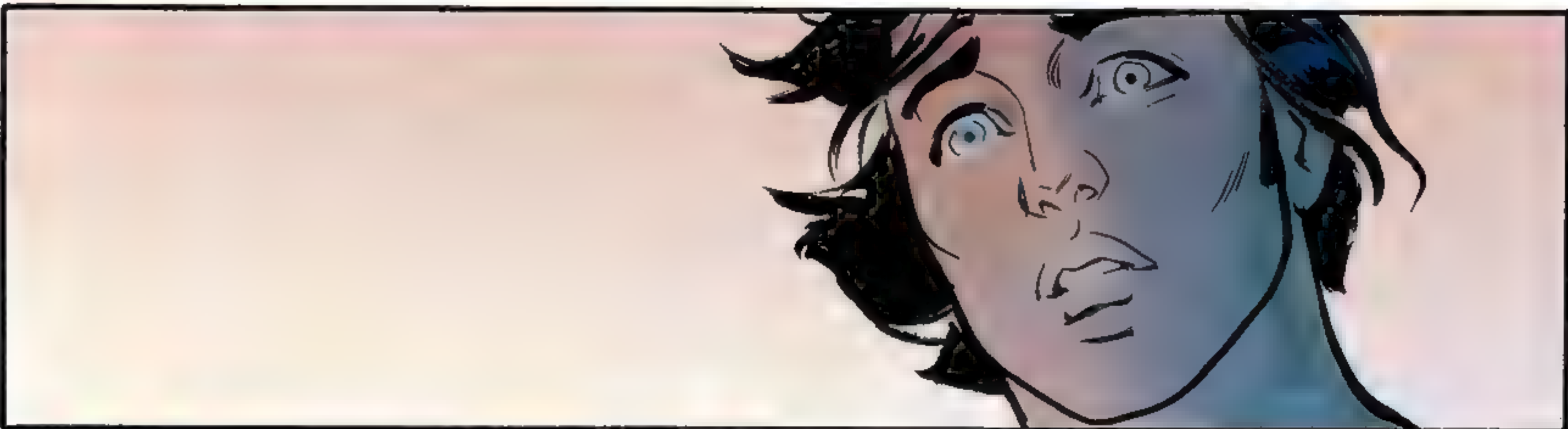
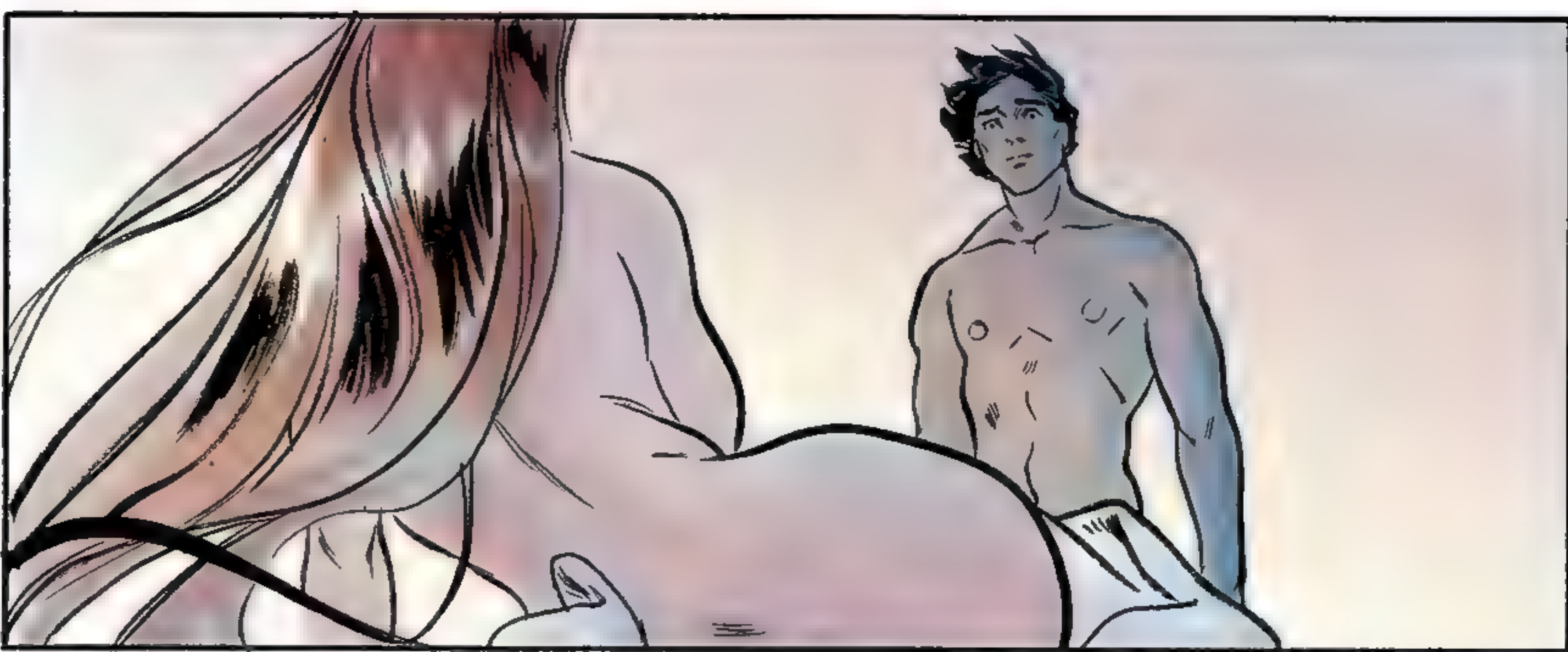
ODIN...
DO YOU REMEMBER
OUR FIRST DAWN?

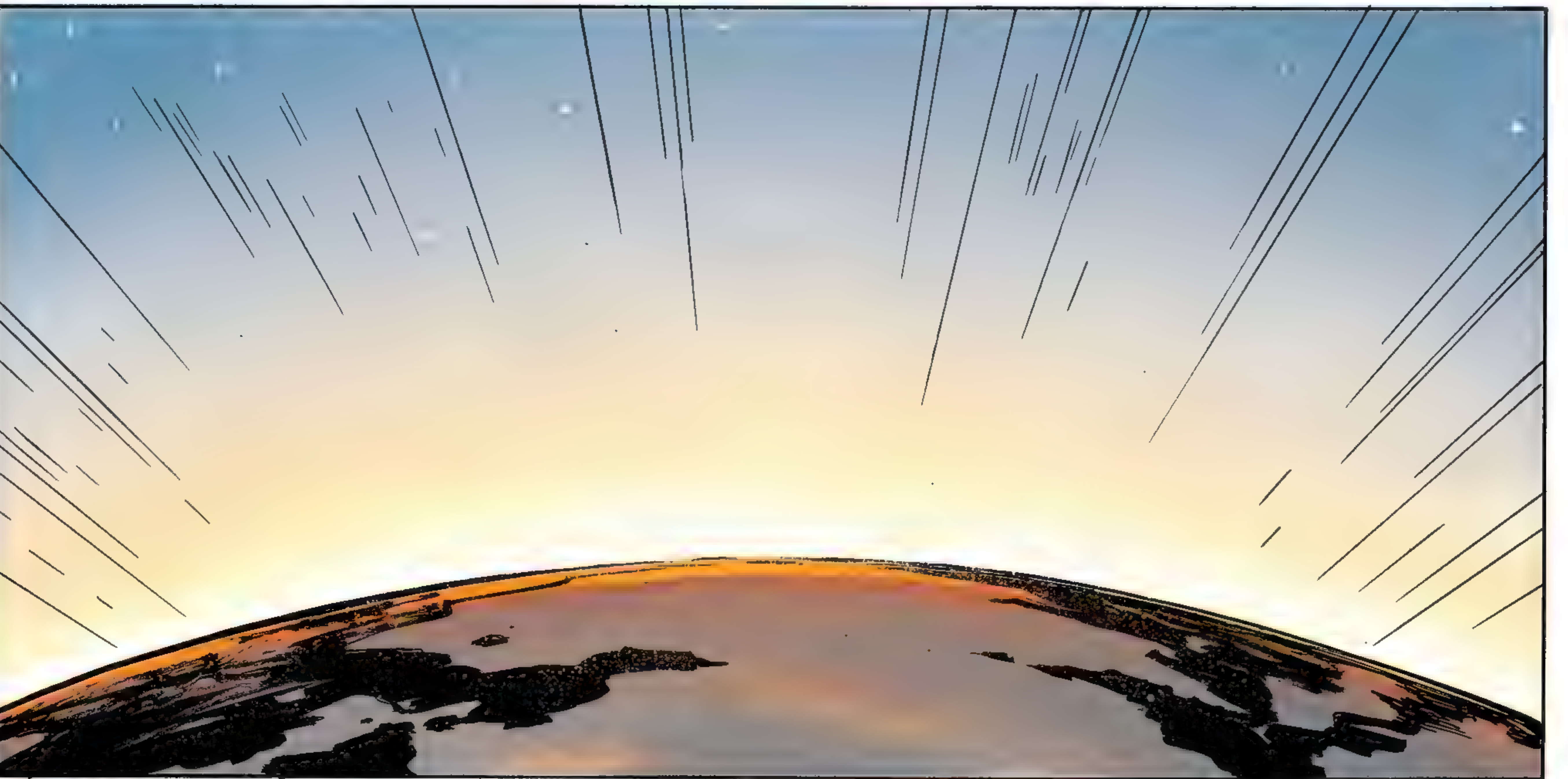
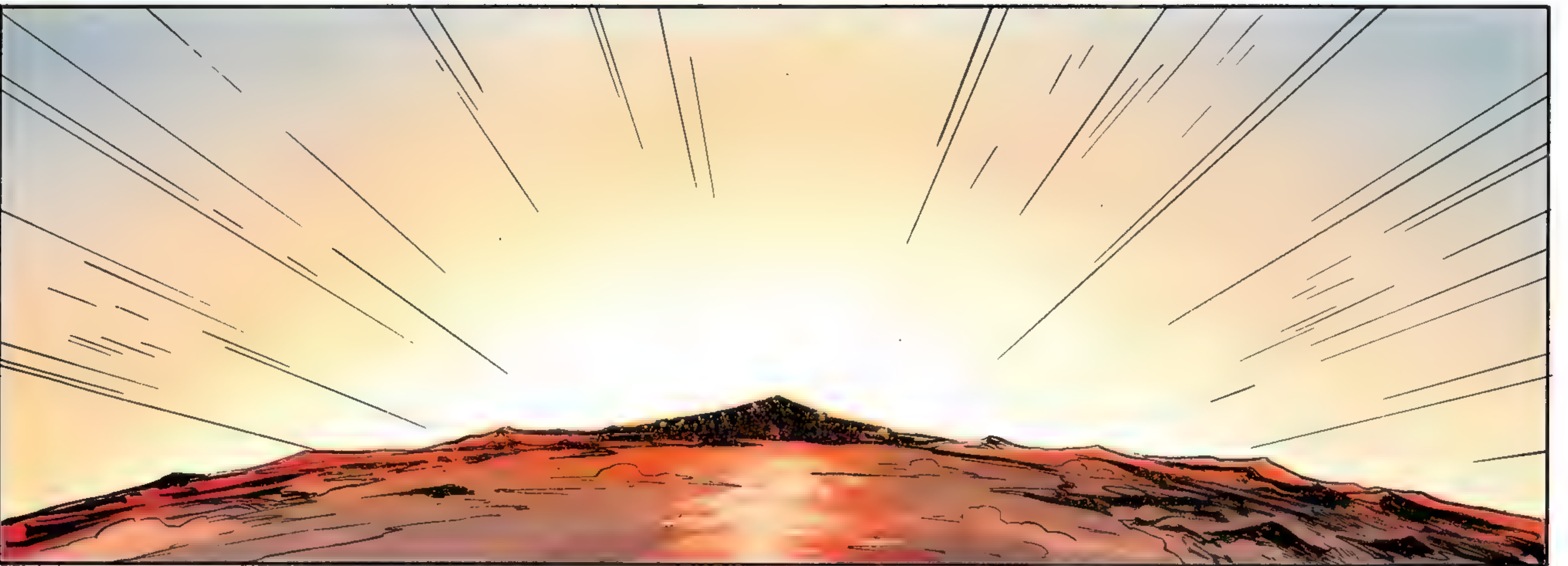
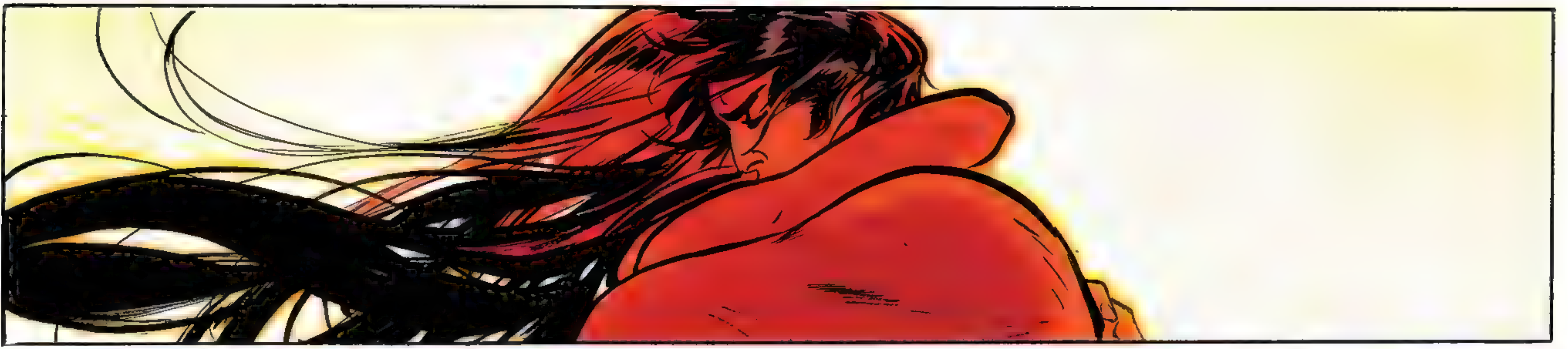
YOU DID
NOT KNOW
FEAR...













SIEGFRIED
FIN
ALEX ALICE

*"Farewell, Valhalla's glittering world!
Let your proud fortress fall to dust!
Farewell, resplendent pomp of the gods!
May your end be blissful, immortal race!
You Norns, snap your rope of symbols!
Dusk of the gods, let your darkness descend!
Night of annihilation, let your mist fall!
Siegfried's star now shines upon me."*

*THE END
ACT III SCENE III*



At tragedy's end, the true stakes of Siegfried's quest come to light. We've followed our protagonists since Book I, but only now do they act. Their power and their very existence hang in the balance.

Since the beginning, Siegfried has been an unwitting player in a tragedy that transcends him. Odin needed innocence, needed ignorance of the gods, to give his hero a chance at defeating the dragon. But the twilight is at hand; the time has come for the revelation of the truth about the three worlds. This interview will take us from Niflheim, realm of the Nibelungs, through Asgard, land of the gods, before finally reaching Midgard, the home of men.

IN THE SCARLET TWILIGHT

ALEX ALICE, INTERVIEWED BY LAURENT KLOETZER AND ÉRIC CHAUVEAU

Laurent Kloetzer writes science fiction and fantasy under the name L.L. Kloetzer. His most recent novel, *Cleer*, was published by Dandel. This interview is the third and last in a series on Siegfried, including "The Stuff of Dreams" and "An Opera on Paper".

Éric Chauveau—opera buff, Wagner expert—has been an avid reader of Alex Alice's work for ten years now.



KLOETZER & CHAUVEAU | So how does one go about building the city of the Nibelungs?

ALEX ALICE | Nibelungs are creatures of stone. Their land is a cold, miserable place for everyone except Mimé, who thinks it's wonderful. Actually, in the legend, the dragon isn't in the city of the Nibelungs. He lives in a cave not far from the surface. Siegfried awaits him on the path to a watering hole, to attack him when he comes to drink.

NIFLHEIM

KC | Why place him in the city? I can't help but think of Tolkien's *Moria*: a monster in the depths of an abandoned underground city, metal that would have been better left alone...

AA | I definitely got my desire to mix myth and adventure from Tolkien: to make a symbolic narrative come alive through exciting events. Just as in *Siegfried* Book II, where going to the dragon's den is a journey in and of itself, the dragon here isn't just hiding in a cave. You have to venture deep into the earth to find him, which evokes another kind of story... I got interested in the underground world through Norse mythology, and by dint of digging away at it, naturally reached hell. I didn't want to make the dragon just another giant fantastical creature destined for destruction, but also a symbol of death. So my dragon is closer to the figure of *Níðhöggr*, the subterranean serpent or dragon who gnaws at the roots of the World Tree of Norse myth, *Yggdrasill*. Yet again, I wanted to combine mythological figures: *Fafnir* from the legend of Siegfried, and *Níðhöggr*, the great dragon of the depths. So naturally his lair became *Hel*, the realm of the dead...



(I)

KC | How did you envision Hel?

AA | I can't remember anymore if the idea is in the myths, but it always seemed obvious to me that it was a frozen place—that's naturally how you'd picture hell if you lived in a Nordic country. A frozen world that also hearkens back to ice at the dawn of time.

KC | Yes, in the first book the Völva recalls the creation of the world through ice and fire...

AA | Book III has two climaxes: one with ice, and the other with fire. It's a simple world—just two elements! Siegfried has to confront them.

KC | Here's what Mimé has to say about the subterranean city: "All the way back, behind the falls...that's where the city starts. Follow the water down. You'll find the Palace of Mists. A staircase winds its way down to the throne room. And there, you will find a rift that plunges into the abyss..."

AA | I wanted to set readers dreaming about the world below and, as in a fairy tale, enumerate the steps involved in getting there. To quicken their imaginations about what was going to happen, while keeping a few surprises in store.

THE DEATH OF BALDR

Norse mythology has its own story about the descent into the underworld. Baldr, most beloved of the gods, meets with death due to Loki's treachery. To the gods' dismay, Hermodr, another of Odin's sons, set out for Hel to bring Baldr back. He had the honor of riding Sleipnir, Odin's eight-legged flying horse. He traveled the Valley of Shadows and cleared the colossal gates which, in the come, were turned into a wall of ice, to stay in keeping with the elemental motif.

(I) THE LAND OF MISTS. Oil pastel, 16 x 24 cm.

(II) THE GATE OF MISTS. 10 x 10 cm.

(III) NIFLHEIM. Atmosphere study, watercolor and white gouache on black paper, 21x18 cm.

KC | The fight with the dragon is the most anticipated moment in this volume. Were you dreading it?

AA | Was I ever! The fight with the dragon is the principal event of this tale. When you're at the foot of the wall, looking up, the challenge seems insurmountable, because it's such a hackneyed mythological scene, and it was up to me to make something unexpected and truly spectacular of it, trying not to let anyone down, especially since I'd been building up to it for two books already.

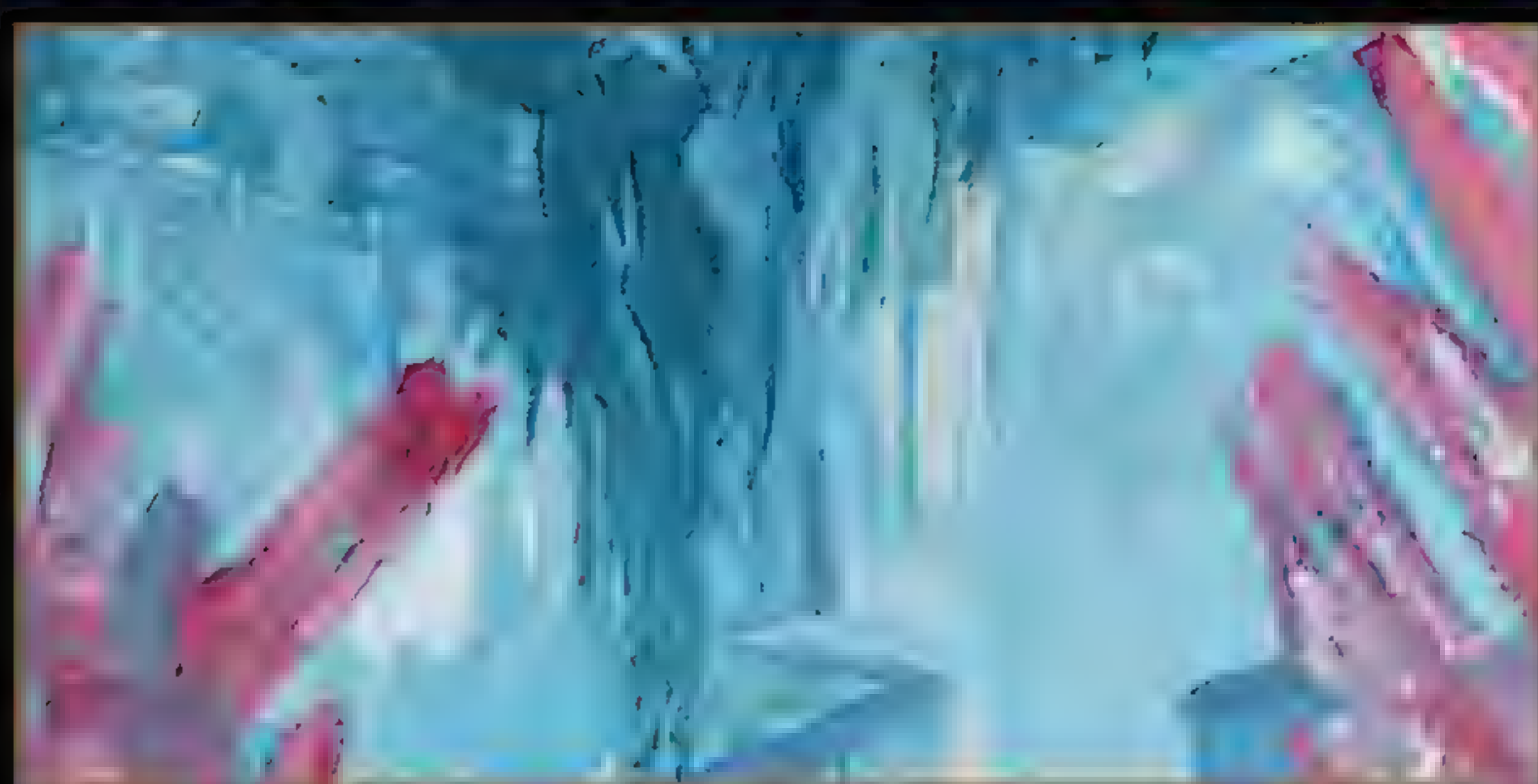
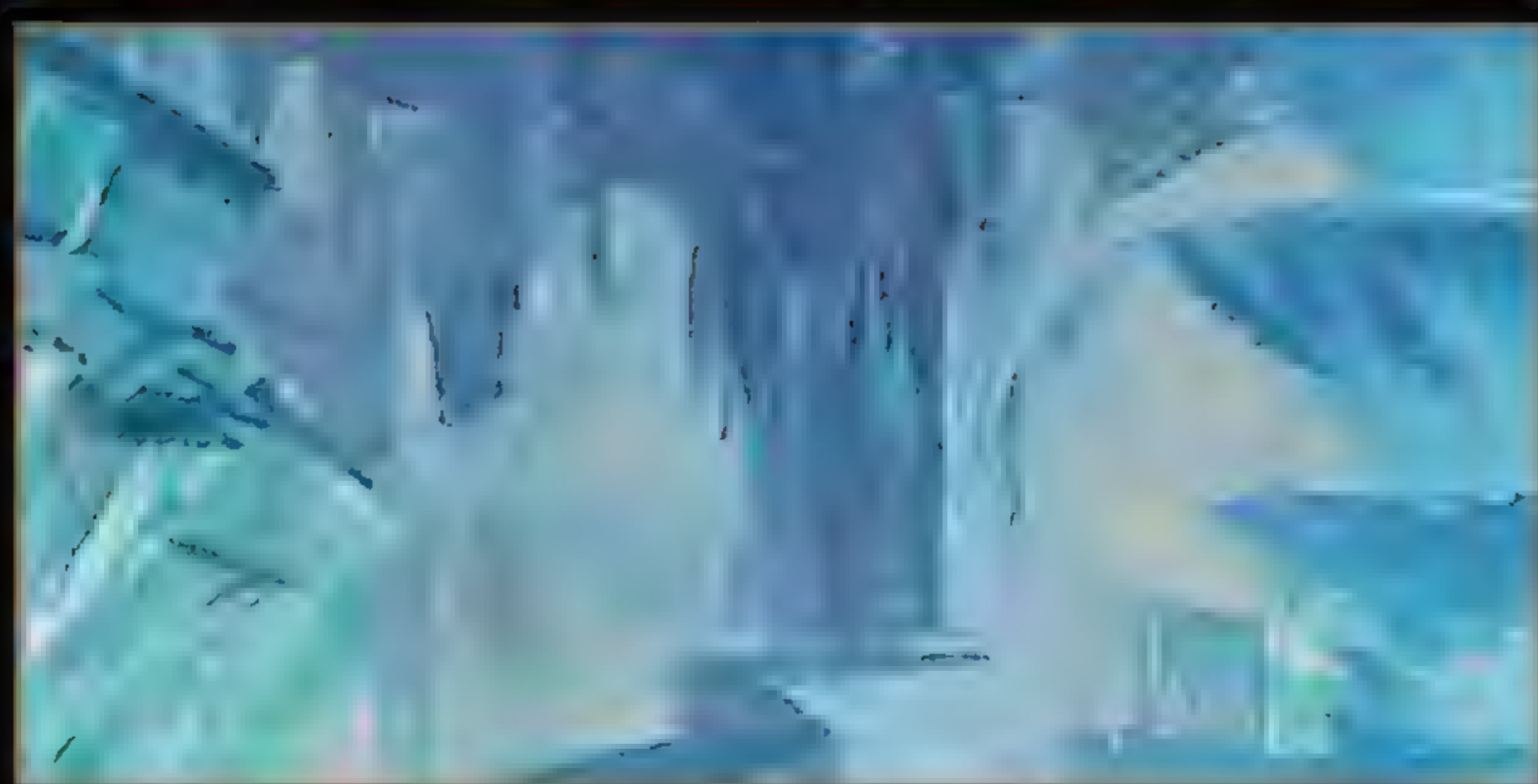
KC | Did you try out several versions before settling on one?

AA | Not really. I realized rather quickly that I wanted a very, very big dragon, a truly formidable opponent. So the hard part was making it seem like the hero had a chance, which wasn't easy.



(11)

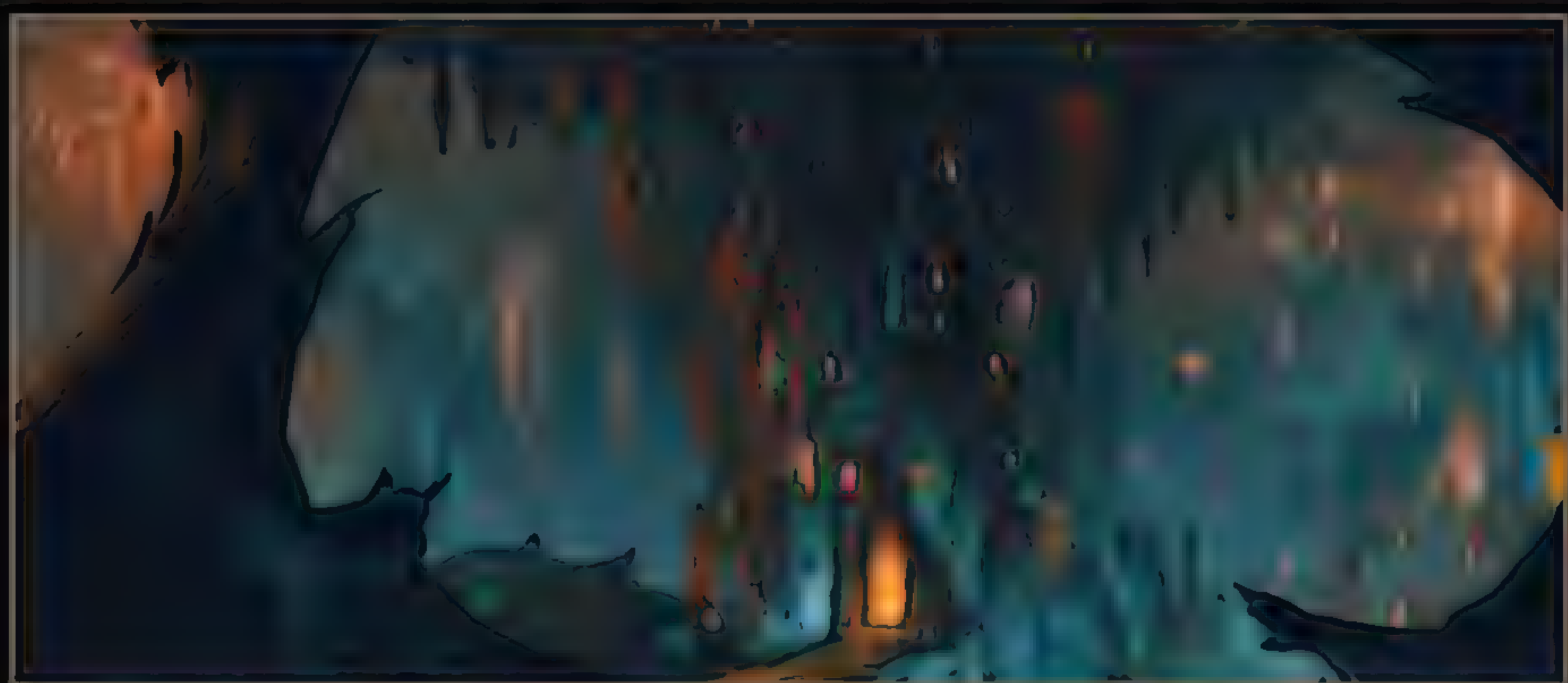
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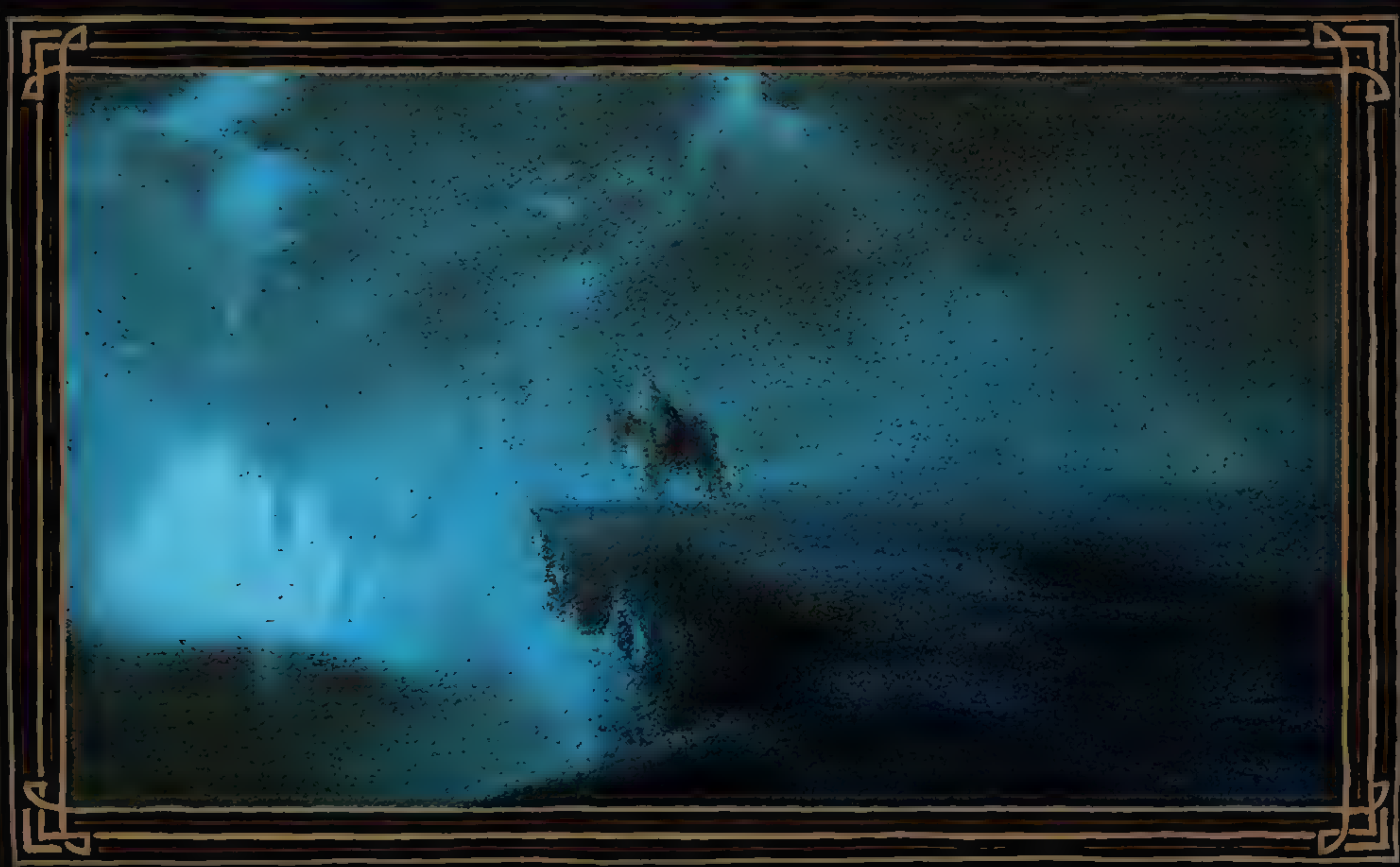




(I)



(II)



(III)



(IV)



(I-II) **THE LAND OF MISTS.** Atmosphere study, Photoshop.

(III) **HEL.** Atmosphere study, pastel, 16 x 24 cm.

(IV) **GRANE VS. MIMÉ.** Pose study by Alex Hesse.

(OPPOSITE) Crystal forests and giant mushrooms, studies for the Nibelung paradise. After the ring-like compositions in Book I, Niflheim was a new attempt to recover the outsized sense of scale and overflowing detail of Philippe Druillet's work. I've got a long way to go!





KC | **He has his flying horse...**

AA | Right, which also came very early, and allows for a more interesting fight. The flying horse and magic sword give Siegfried a chance—a bit of hope, one might say—that he might succeed despite it all.

KC | **One of the things I knew before prepping this interview was that in the myth, Siegfried kills the dragon by hiding in a trench so he can stab the creature's belly when it passes over him. What did you think of that scene?**

AA | I didn't find it very epic.

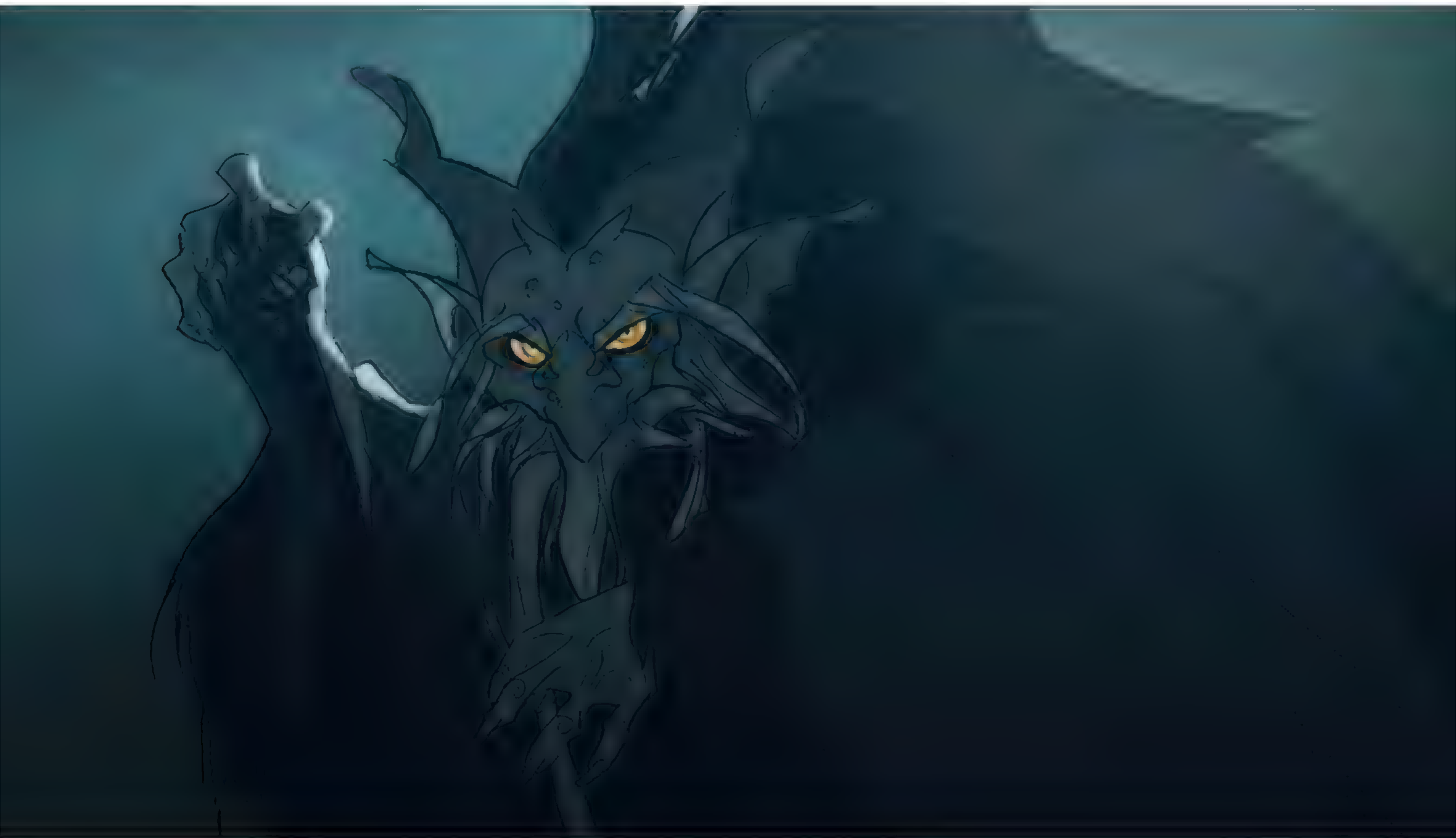
KC | **But you held on to the idea anyway...**

AA | Just to allude to the legend. But I made it so that it didn't work. And tried to have it lead to something grander, at least in my eyes. The original tale does have interesting elements: Siegfried gets told to bury himself on the path between the dragon and the pool, to pierce its belly, but since the dragon's blood is poisonous, Siegfried has to dig several holes in the

ground so that the blood can run out and not drown him. There are some interesting symbols there. But I couldn't take up that element in a literal way; I didn't really see how to use it in my story. I literally had a character bury himself, since he was going down to hell. In a more prosaic way, that bit about the trench works with the vision of a giant serpent, but not really with the massive, earth-shaking dragon of my dreams.

KC | **Your main source material was the *Ring of the Nibelung*, Wagner's *Ring* cycle. How does he handle this part?**

AA | Wagner includes it; Wagner doesn't shrink from anything! Onstage, the dragon is often represented by some mechanical device, with a singer offstage who makes a kind of unsettling echo. You wonder how Wagner pictured pulling that off onstage in a way worthy of the myth. I saw the Met do it very impressively. Half the scenery turned into a giant ribcage, with the dragon's skeleton head facing Siegfried—really impressive machinery, but it felt kind of flat. That fight was made for comics and movies.





KC | **Let's talk about the dragon itself. Every dragon is a chimera, a compilation of elements from different animals. What animals inspired yours? Where'd you get your dragon's head? Its spines? Its claws?**

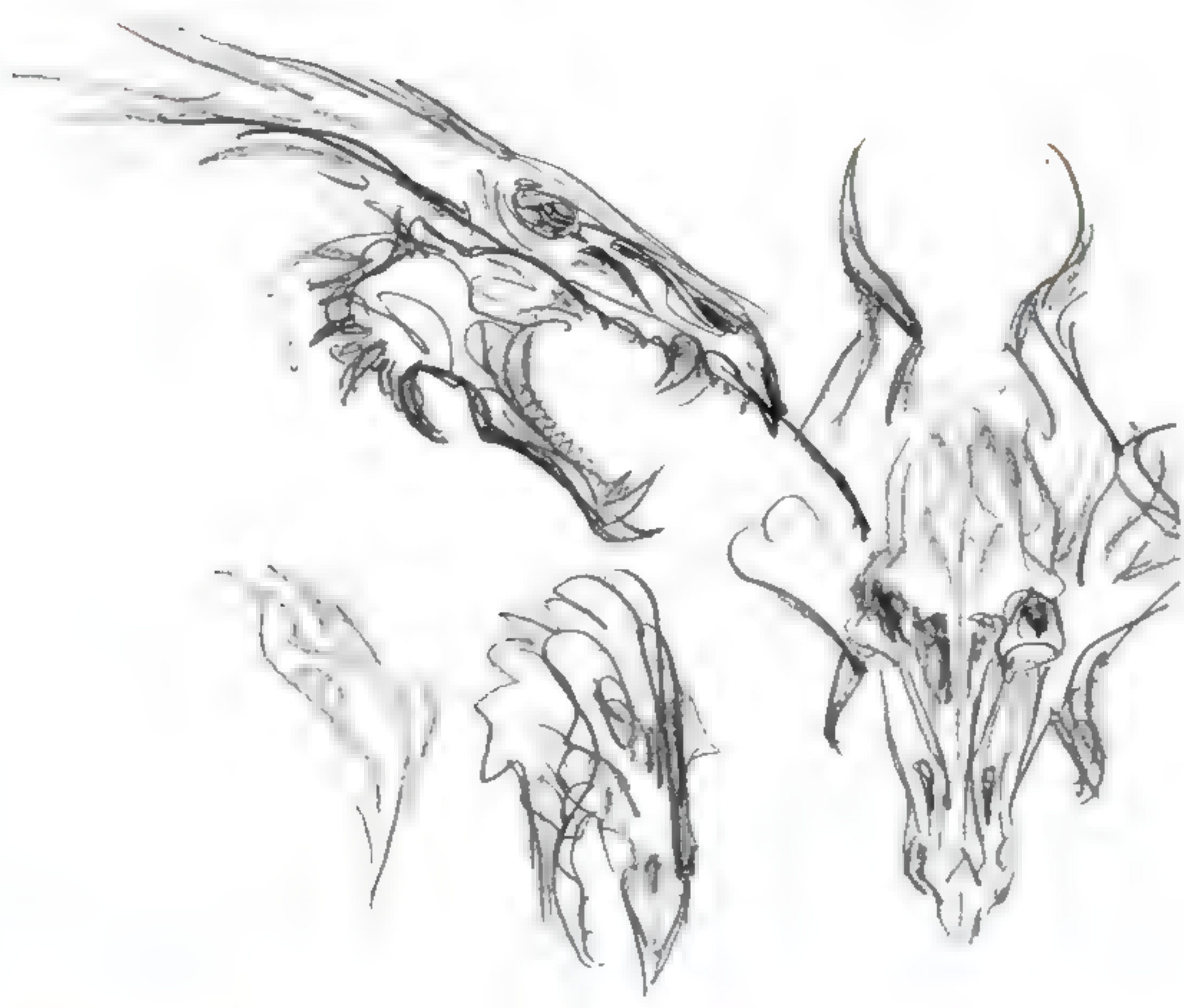
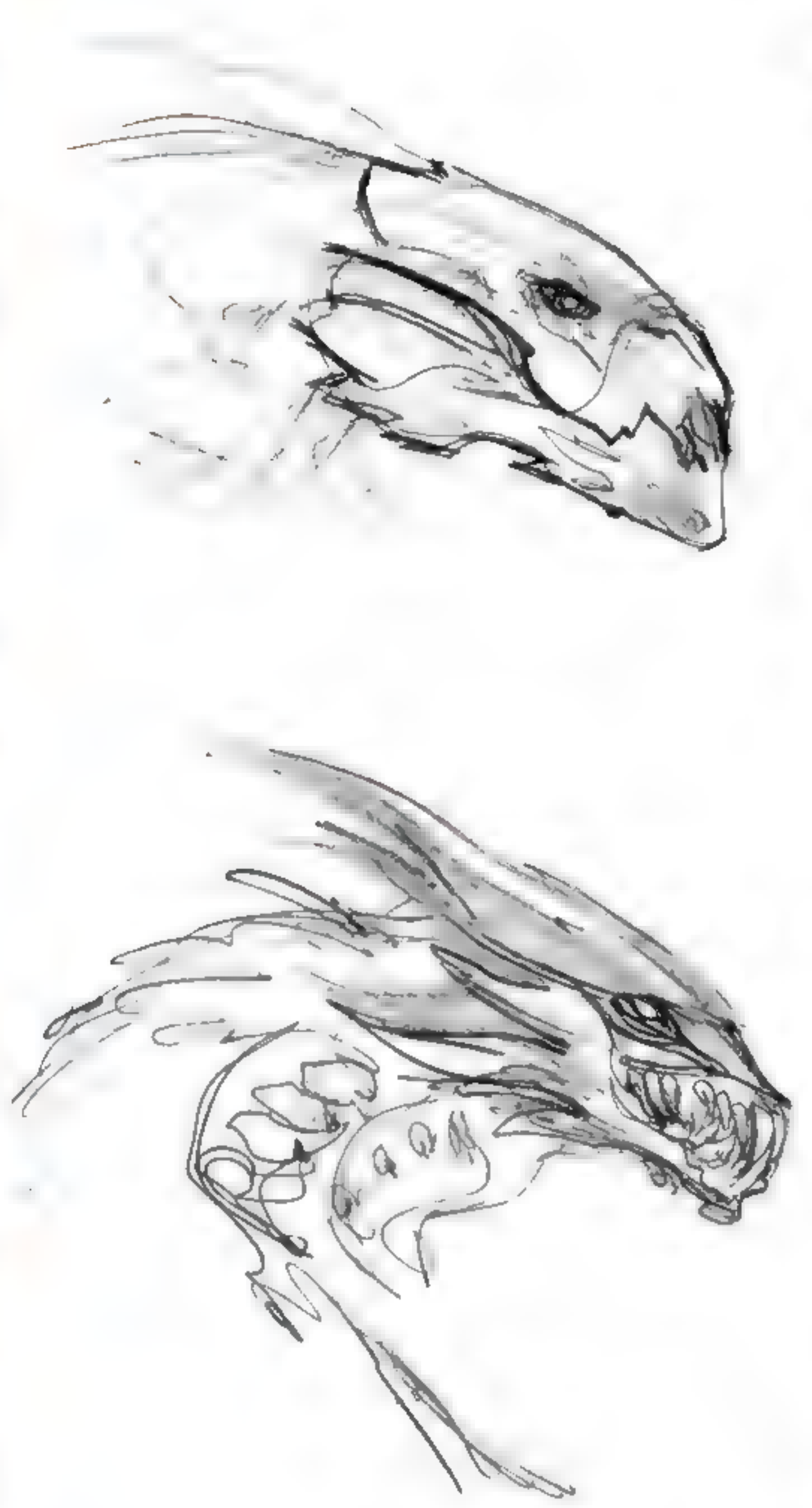
AA | I went through a number of ideas. At one point I wanted a giant worm, a devourer of corpses, like Níðhöggr. A sickly white creature, blind, with a black head, something really unpleasant. But in the end I was inspired by animal skulls: bears, raccoons, horses. I wanted to go back to the archetypal Western dragon: a winged, reptilian creature. His back claws are crow feet. His front claws are still four-fingered Nibelung hands, to preserve some continuity between his different states. Same with the head. The long spines are from sea creatures, like scorpion fish. I did sketches of fish, since dragons in all cultures are associated with water. The spines make him look more aggressive and like he takes up more space. I got his horns from another magnificent dragon, from *Sleeping Beauty*. But it was important to me never to show all of him at once.

KC | **I noticed that. There are only a few instances where we see most of him, and even those are rare. Did you ever draw all of him at once, just for your own reference?**

AA | I tried, I did some decent sketches, but I dropped them. The dragon had to remain immense, elusive, even for me. Above all, I wanted to avoid any zoological aspect. I thought it would be a mistake to make him just another animal, as is the case in many fantasy books.

KC | **Reading *Siegfried*, I got the impression that for you, the world below was a home to all fantastical creatures. The fusion of Alberich and Fafnir, the Völva, Mimé and the other Nibelungs...**

AA | Yes—unlike the other surface-dwelling fantastical creatures, who remain subdued, basically incarnations of natural elements, like the giants. It was my way of putting myself into what I thought of as a Norse mindset, giving the elements a will of their own: the rocks were petrified Nibelungs, the storms possessed consciousness...But the descent into the underworld was what really opened the gates of the fantastic. It's the world we don't know, where everything is possible. Above, on the surface, I wanted to hang on to a certain kind of credibility.



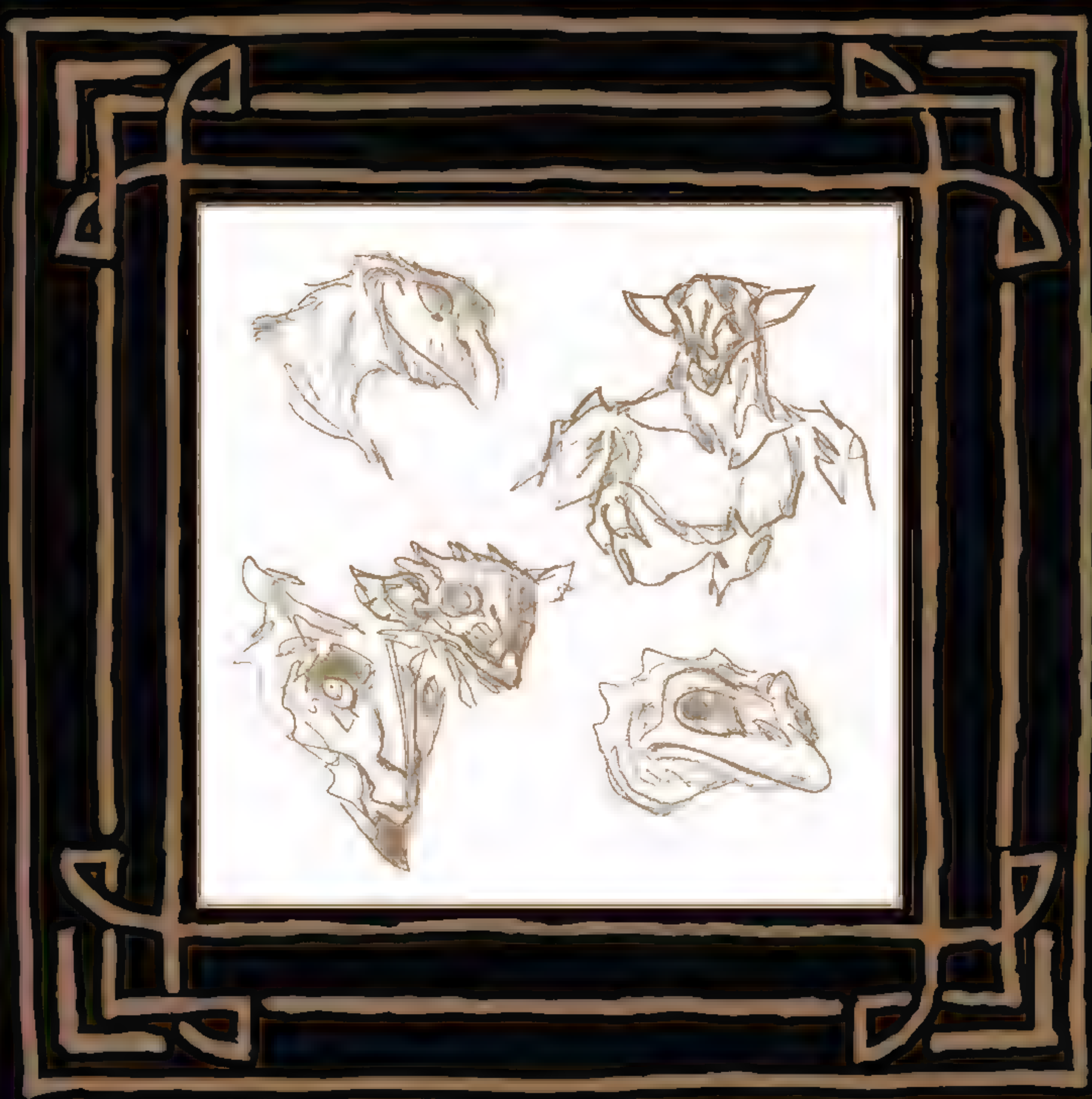


(ABOVE) **FAPNIR EMERGES FROM THE EARTH.** *Digital atmosphere study.*

(II) **NIBELUNGS.** *Includes the inevitable reference to The Dark Crystal.*

(III) **SIEGFRIED'S HELMET.**

(IV) **THE GOLD.** *To avoid looking too much like Lord of the Rings (the adaptation was hitting screens while Siegfried was in development), I made the gold a bracelet. It is a clear symbol of power, and easier to visualize. Its final shape was that of a Moebius strip folded back on itself twice.*



(II)



(III)





KC | Keeping things credible, as you put it—does that, for you, mean we’re not really in another world, but in our own?

AA | Yes. Or rather, the land of myths from our own world. An unknown but accessible territory—just over the mountain, maybe. Niflheim, on the other hand, is an otherworld, which Siegfried accesses by going through the waterfall. Then, by taking the Bridge of Stars, the road to Hel, he passes into yet a third world.

KC | Until he reaches the black, stagnant water around the dragon. Water is symbolic throughout your story.

AA | Indeed, the story follows the course of water. It begins in a forest with nothing but standing water. When Siegfried decides to leave home, he finds himself in a spring, and then he and Mimé follow the river all the way to the falls that lead to the world below, until he finally reaches the black, frozen waters of Hel. As long as Fafnir is there, water leads to the

dragon and dies: it becomes the water of death and oblivion, reflecting nothing.

Hel is frozen over, water imprisoned. When the dragon emerges, this world is turned upside down, freeing the story and allowing Siegfried to continue on his way. The river eventually leads to the sea. On the horizon is the world of men.

KC | And the surface of the water always marks a border between worlds.

AA | Yes, we discussed that back in Book I. For example, Mimé’s webbed hands show that he can pass from one world to another. But Norse cosmology is strange and complex. Yet another bridge—this time in the shape of a rainbow—will lead Siegfried to the next world, the world of the gods.







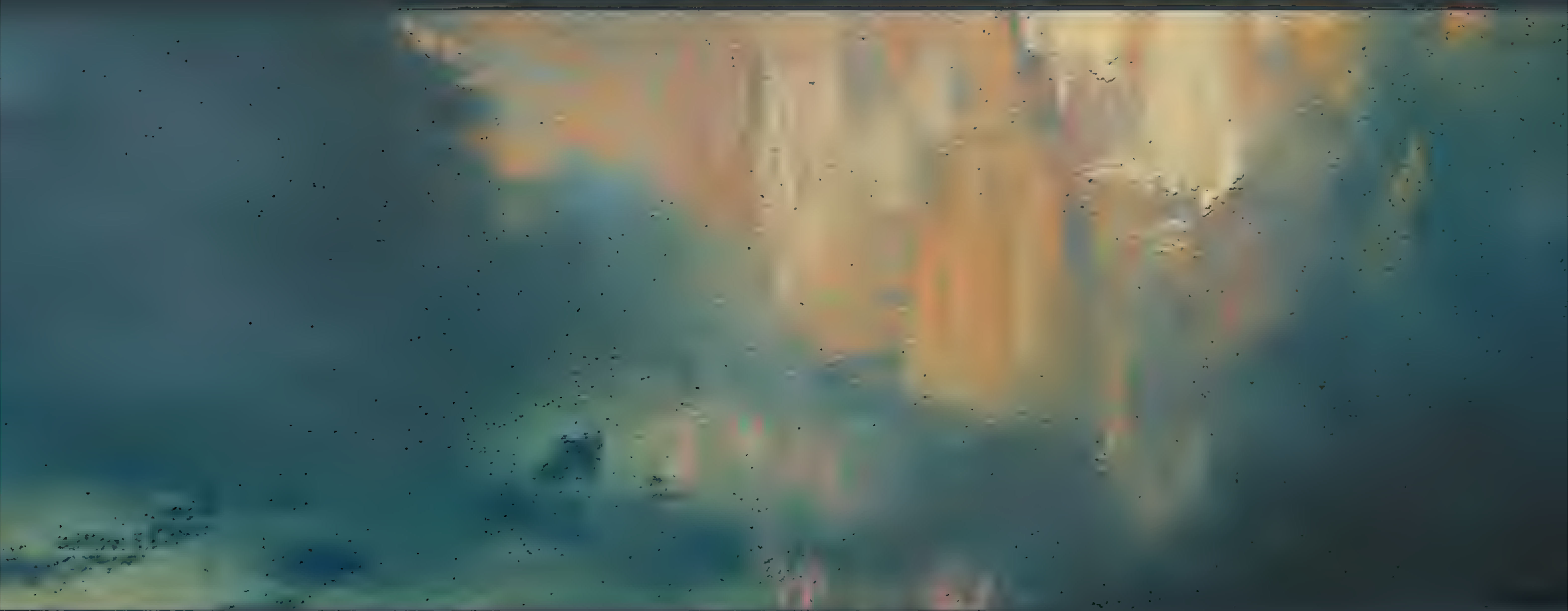
KLOETZER & CHAUVEAU | Let's move on to another major protagonist of this story: Odin, master of storms and magic, god of gods! What was your main inspiration in designing him?

VALHALLA

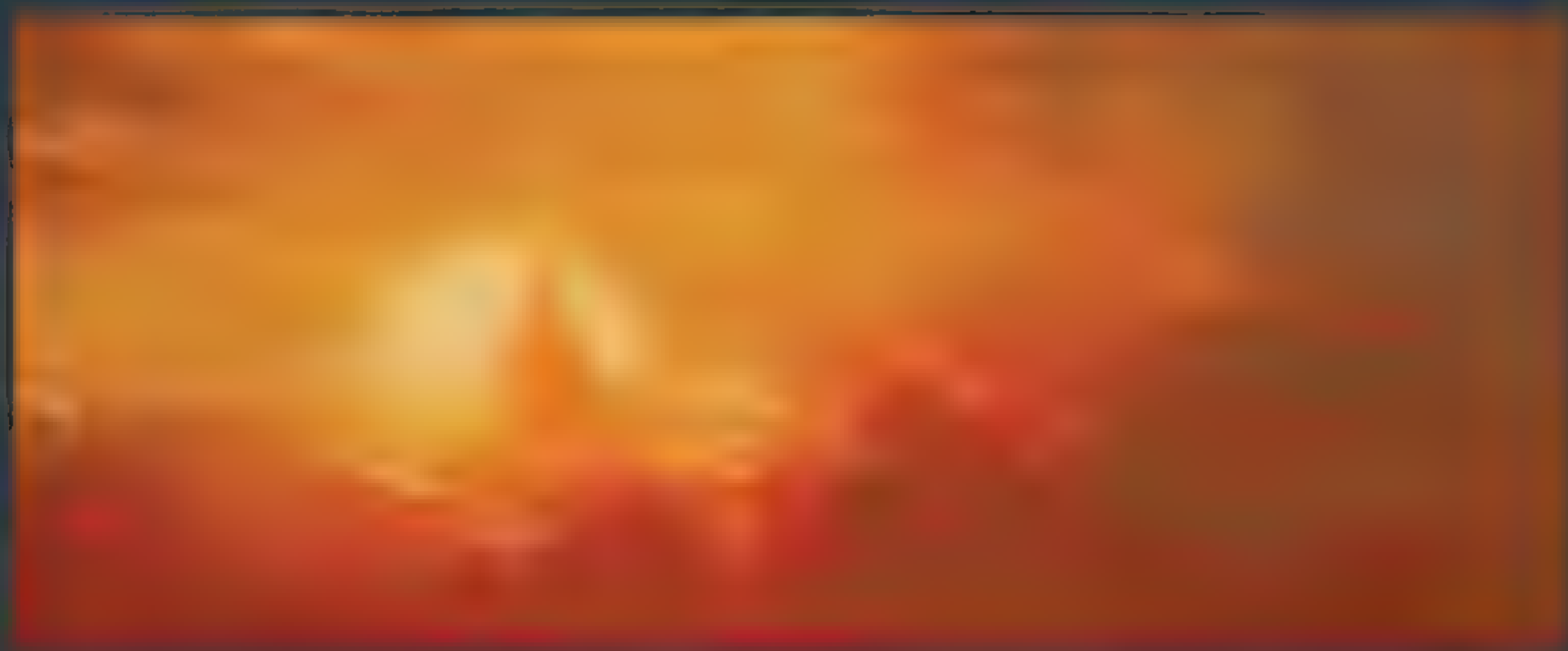
ALEX ALICE | Wagner, probably. Odin (Wotan in Wagner) is the main protagonist of the tetralogy; he's in all four operas. He's very human. He undergoes the greatest change in the story, from hot-blooded youth to renunciation and death. His fate crosses paths with Siegfried's, but the two have opposite trajectories. On one hand, you have a young man who becomes a hero and comes into his full power, and on the other, a mature man who starts out at the height of his powers but must confront decline and his own end.

The idea of starting Book III with a flashback to the birth of the world came to me very late, but it seemed essential. It let me make Book III about Odin, to show the arc of his character in all its dimensions, from youth to death. I wonder if this idea—going back to the very beginning of the story—didn't come from Peter Jackson's *Return of the King*. The movie opens with Smeagol and Deagol finding the ring, and that fratricidal clash. Heading up the third part of the story with the very beginning, going back to the heart of the story even while the stakes were being raised everywhere else, helps re-center the story. When you reach the end, the beginning's still fresh in your mind, full circle—the ring is closed!





III



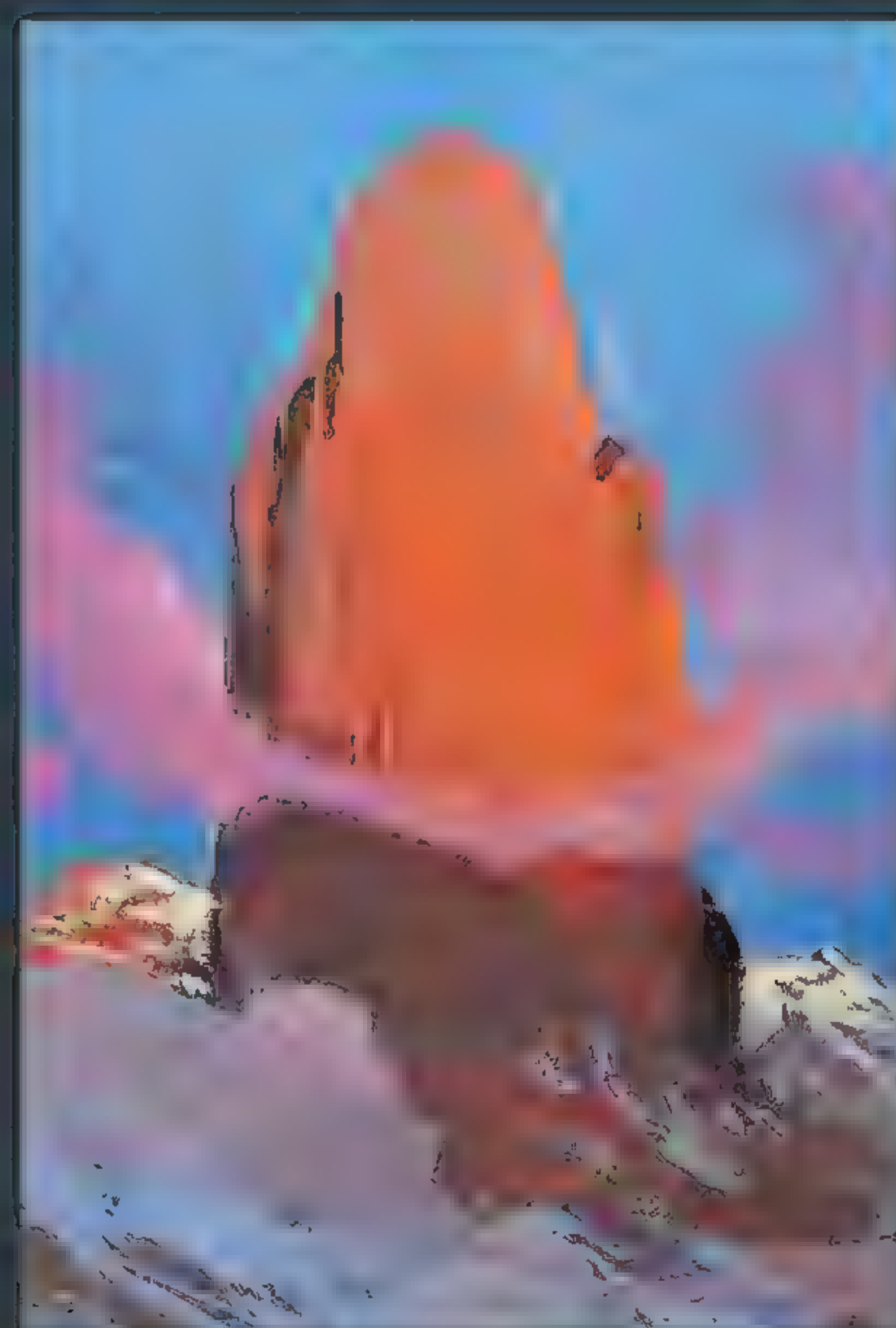
III



III



IV



IV

(I-IV) VALHALLA, 'Atmosphere study,' pastel, 5 x 12 cm.

(V) VALHALLA, 'Atmosphere study,' watercolor and white gouache on gray paper, 5 x 8 cm.

(VI) ODIN, 'Early sketches.'



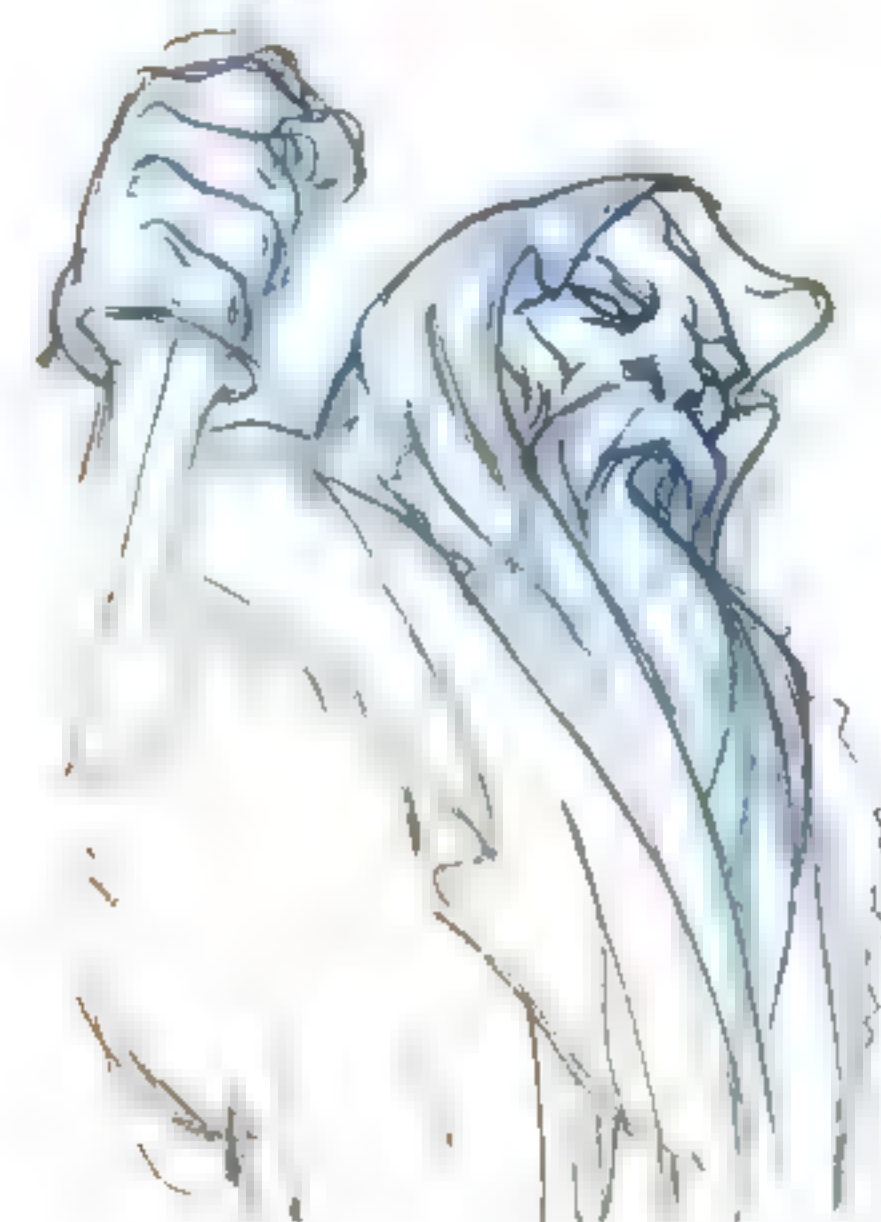
KC | The opening scene is striking: the god hanging from the tree...

AA | It's from Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, a collection of Icelandic myths from the 13th Century. At the time, Iceland was Christianized, and it's possible that passage was a Christ reference.

KC | Tell us about Odin's various guises: the naked blond man at the height of his powers at the beginning of Book II, the walker in Book I, the warrior on his horse, the god in all his majesty who frees the dawn imprisoned in his hand...

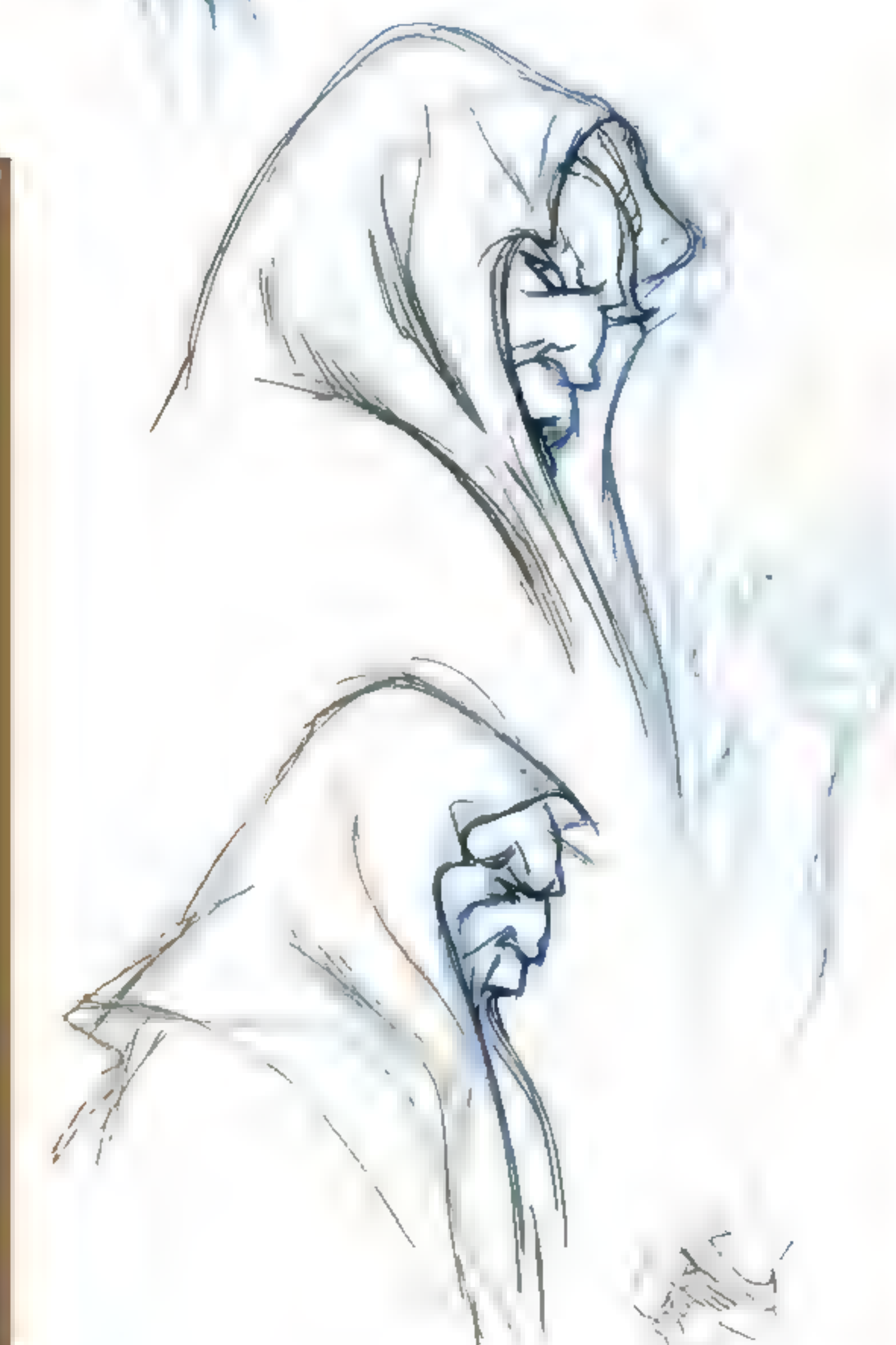
AA | I like them all! But since the primary source material was the opera *Siegfried*, the only one I started out with was the walker, Wagner's Wanderer. A person who hides his face and only reveals his name very late. And yet this is a frustrated version of Odin. In the myths, as in Wagner, Odin is also an impulsive figure, full of violence. In the form of the Wanderer, he corresponds with the archetype of the wise old man, bearded and hooded.





*"I know that I hung
on a windswept tree
for nine long nights,
pierced by a spear,
offered up to Odin:
myself, given to myself,
on that tree
whose roots run
no man knows where."*

*From the Prose Edda by
Snorri Sturluson*





(II)

AA | One thing that brings us closer to Odin as the story's main character: the most fleshed-out love story is the one between him and the Earth, even if we only get a few scenes. The story between Siegfried and the Valkyrie is left unfinished; they never meet before the end.

KC | Are you happy to be free of the hooded wise old man character?

AA | I liked him a lot, but I really wanted to develop other aspects of the god. In Norse myths, Odin is a lot like a Swiss army knife, a god for all occasions: the dead, war, contracts, horses, runes, knowledge, magic. He really is the All-Father. It would have been hard to explore all these attributes, but I wanted to give a glimpse of them.

KC | A god with many attributes, the god of gods, as you say. But also the only god in the book!

AA | Yes, pretty much!



(III)



(IV)



(V)

(I) ODIN. Studies by Mathieu Lauffray and Alex Alice. The sketch (upper left) was inspired by a bust of Rodin by Bourdelle.

(II-V) VALHALLA. Atmosphere study, watercolor and white gouache on gray paper, 15 x 8 cm.





KC | What did you do with the rest?

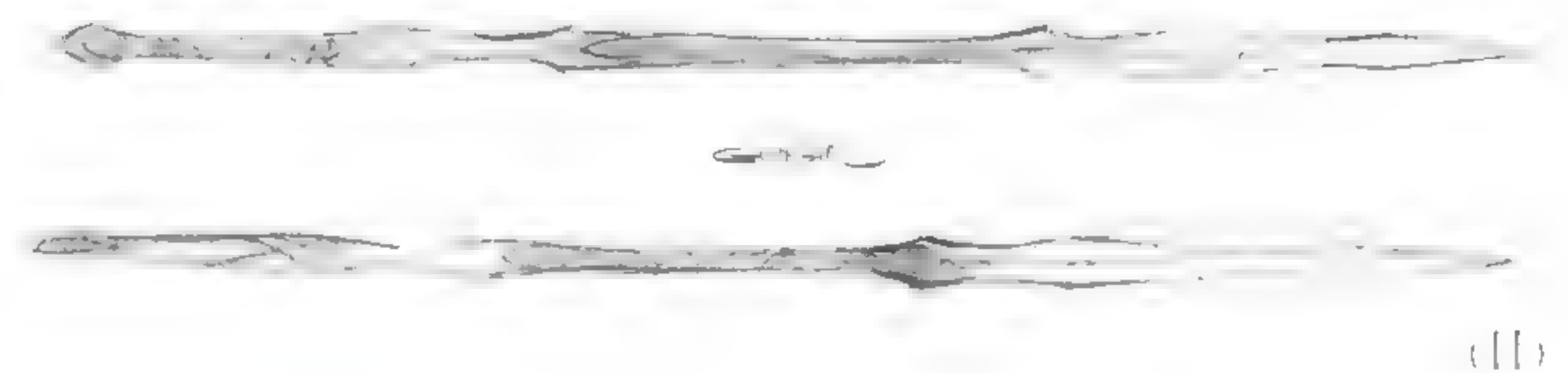
AA | I wondered about them a lot right from the earliest drafts of the script. I didn't know what to do with them: this intimate epic had very few people, and I didn't see how to fit them in. Gods may be human in appearance, but what makes them divine is their knowledge and behavior. You realize Odin's a god because I give him lots of space, lots of pages. And since the other gods have no role in the story, well, how to show they're divine? One option was to give them god costumes, or ramp up the special effects. But I didn't like that idea; we talked about it in Book I. For a while I thought I'd show the gods in Valhalla, but since we never see the inside of Valhalla...Within the scope of the story, I think the gods are better off left to the reader's imagination than depicted as extras.

KC | Are they extras in Wagner?

AA | No, they have active roles; an entire opera is dedicated to them, *Das Rheingold*. After that you hardly ever see them. I justified their absence in Books I and II when Odin recalls all the gods: the story takes place in a world without gods. That way, I avoided listing them all by name.

KC | Speaking of names, you name his spear: "Gaze upon Gungnir...it is the axle, and the world its wheel."

AA | In that instance, naming it let me emphasize that this was a literal, not metaphorical fact. The spear is a magical weapon, and *really* is the axis of the world.



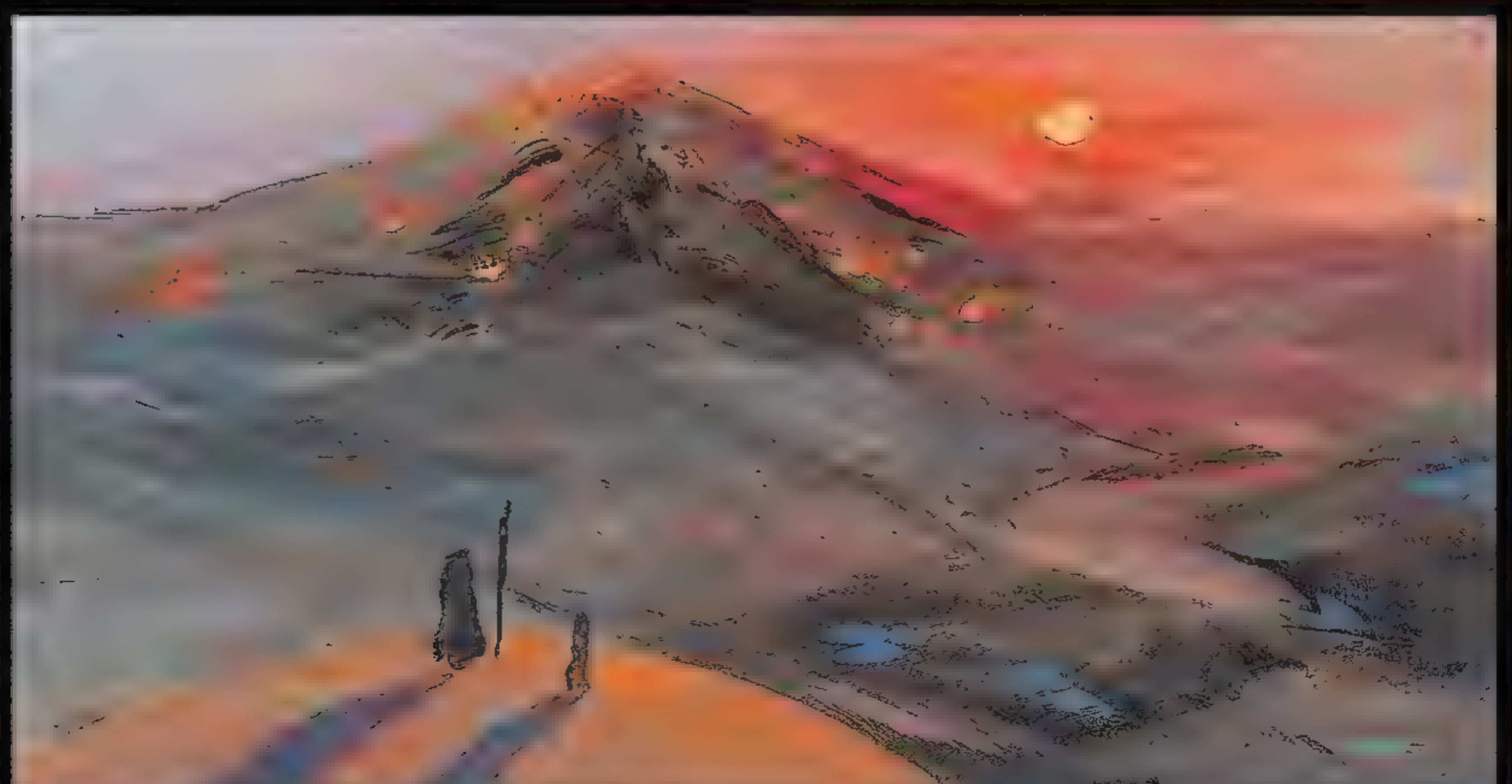
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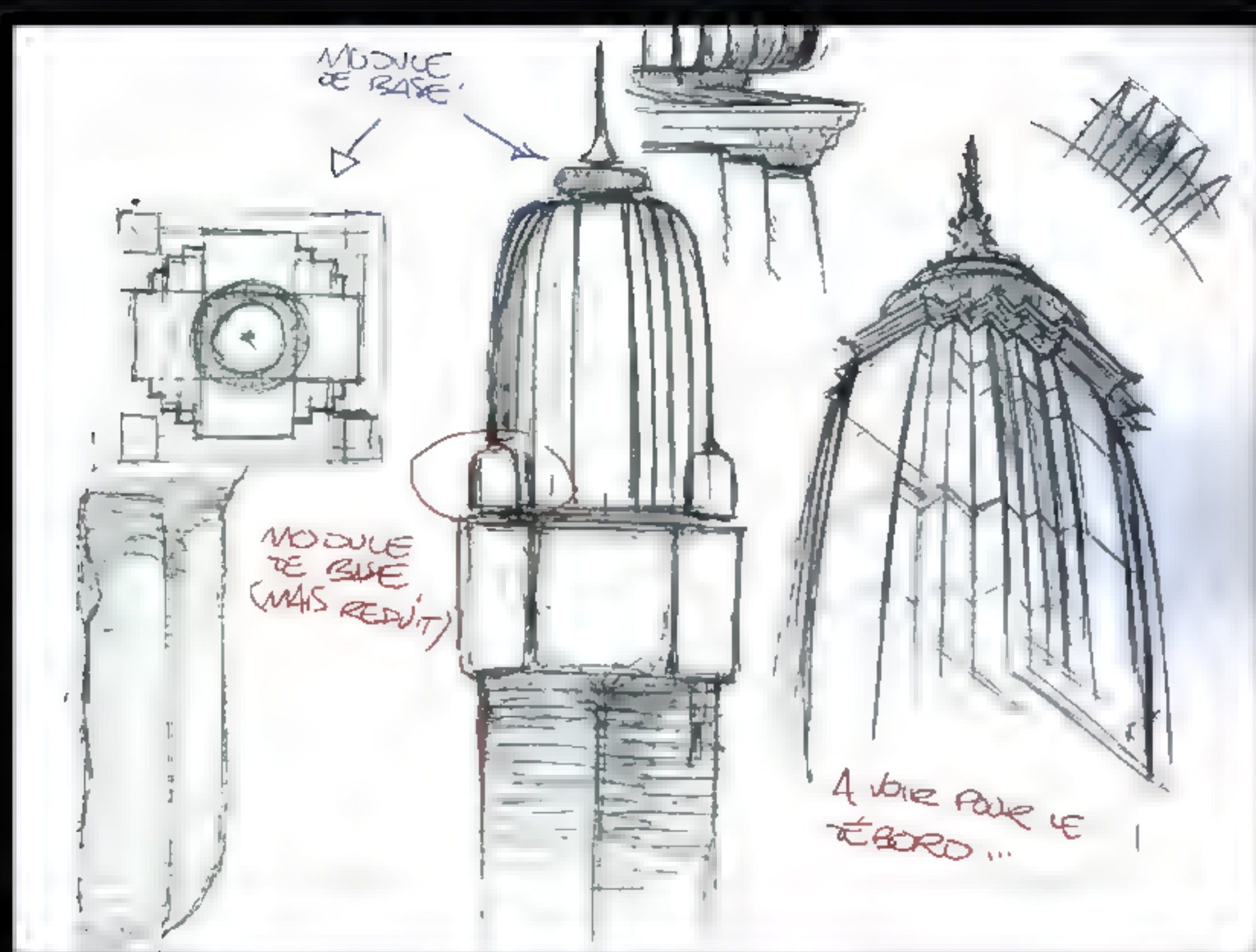
(III)

(I) Models of Odin for the movie, studies by Mathieu Lauffray and Alex Alice, with help from the mighty Zébé (cf p. 164-165).

(II) GUNGNIR. Early sketches.

(III) THE MOUNTAIN OF FIRE. Atmosphere study, watercolor and white gouache on gray paper, 6 x 8 cm.





(I)



(II)

KC | Let's talk about Valhalla a bit. I'd always pictured a great Nordic hall made of wood, where warriors gathered and celebrated. But you drew a John-Howe-style palace straight from Dante!

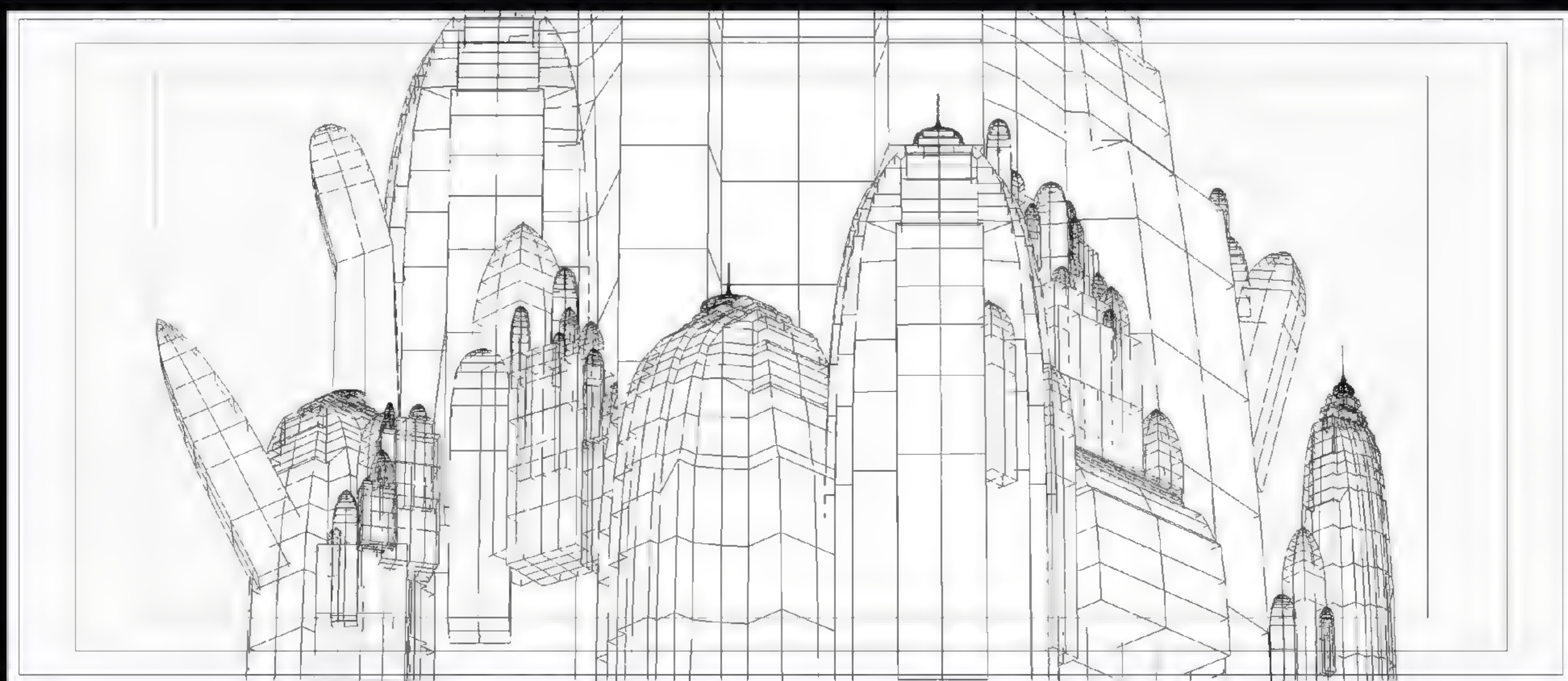
AA | That idea also came from Wagner and Norse mythology. In Wager, giants built Valhalla. When I decided my giants were forces of nature, I wondered what it would be like if the forces of nature built a palace. I imagined they'd act through tectonic thrust, the erosion of wind and rain...so it would be something that looked like a mountain, but consciously sculpted by the elements to make a home worthy of the gods. There are two families of gods in Norse mythology: the Æsir, to which Odin belongs, who fought and conquered the ancient gods, the Vanir. It was long believed the Æsir came from Asia. That's probably false, but I was struck by that idea. I thought it would be interesting, in order to stay away from "local color," to give the home

of the gods a shape that evoked an Indian temple—not in its details, but in its general shape. We worked with that idea for the movie, with Mathieu Lauffray. That's where the ever-smaller shapes reaching skyward came from... then I stumbled across an image of Valhalla by Franz Stassen, which was more like an outsized palace. The seat of absolute power, totalitarian and terrifying, in the line of



Albert Speer, the architect for the Third Reich. He could've been inspired by Wagner's dark side, the dark side of this fascination for power, the source of evil that is Odin's downfall.

(III)





(V)



(IV)

(I, IV) Sketch by Mathieu Lauffray.

(II) Layout for the movie.

(III) 3D model for the movie by Norbert Rozowski.

(V) Background by Patrice Suau.

(VI) Digital coloring study.

(VII) 3D rendering of Patrice Suau's background by Julien Georgel and Norbert Rozowski. A system for projecting painting on a 3D structure allowed us to manipulate elements of the setting.



(VI)

(VII)





(1)



(1b)

I. **VALHALLA.** *Designated by Mithras and the other gods.*

II. *Temple of the gods, Mithras and the other gods.*

III. *Temple of the gods, Mithras and the other gods.*

IV. **THE TEMPTATION OF VALHALLA.** *A more serious ending of the Valhalla. Tempted by the gods.*



(III)

KC | Hence the dome?

AA | You can catch a glimpse of that in Stassen. In the beginning of Book II, it allows me to show Odin overlooking all the Earth. Circles are also a symbol of divinity and power.

KC | The feeling I get from your Valhalla is that it's a cold, inhuman place. No wonder Siegfried passes up the offer.

AA | I considered setting scenes inside Valhalla to give an idea of the Norse pleasure dome, but it was too...human. I even had a scene where the Valkyries showed a more...tempting side. I thought I'd use these female figures to suggest the delights of Valhalla, apart from the table with the immortal roasted boar reborn every day from its bones. Norse Valhalla has a very prosaic quality. It's a pleasure palace with all-you-can-eat boar and mead. You can fight and be reborn endlessly—a very rustic version of paradise! By refusing to show the details, I tried to make my Valhalla a symbol of universal power, at the risk of making it too abstract.



(IV)



(V)







IM ZBENDZOT

KLOETZER & CHAUVEAU | Actually, there's more than one god in your story; there are two: Odin and the Earth. Does the Earth correspond to a Wagnerian character?

ALEX ALICE | In Wagner, Odin/Wotan is a husband to Fricka, guardian of the sacred bonds of marriage, who sabotages one of the tetralogy's most beautiful love stories. A real 19th Century bourgeois matron, she spends her time reminding Odin of his duties. That wasn't what I wanted at all. Odin was a vigorous, insatiable man who'd had many women, notably Erda, a strange, veiled figure rising from the earth. She could see the future, warned Odin of the risks he ran if he tried to recover the ring. Odin abandoned the gold because of her. Afterwards, it's implied that he went back to her and she gave him many children, including the Valkyries. The character of Erda seems a far less interesting and commensurate with Fricka's, so I combined her with Odin's legitimate wife.





(I) **THE EARTH.** *Studies. A certain influence from the Hesperian, in the shape of the tree, and the presence of stakes.*

(II) *The Earth, seen from what remains of the old, and the new, the old, the new, from a distance.* *Alfred Hesse*

KC | **What a difficult character to put in play!**

AA | The Earth is the writer of this story! She knows everything in advance and points the characters the right way so they do what must be done for fate to play out. She knows all, Odin knows she knows all, he entrusts himself to her capable hands, as a Viking might to the hands of fate.

KC | **She's the one who lays out the stakes and helps Odin accept his end.**

AA | Yes, but it's important that the final decision be Odin's.

KC | **"Odin, do you remember our first dawn, my love? Do you remember my face? My first face?" First face, woman-tree...**

AA | That's Erda, whom we talked about already.

KC | **Second face, the little girl on the bridge...**

AA | In Norse mythology, a bridge links the world of the living with that of the dead. This bridge is guarded by a little

girl named Móðguðr, and that's all we know about here. I was very struck by that. Astonishing that the Viking guardian of Hel was a little girl! I had that image in mind very early on. It's not explicitly stated that she's the same character as the Earth...but that's a bit clearer with the Völva.

KC | **Which makes for yet a third face!**

AA | The goddess Earth is threefold in Norse mythology: the Earth of beginnings, the Earth of now, and the sterile Earth of the end of time. Three goddesses, representing past, present, and future. Odin the insatiable, ever questing for eternity, seduces all three of them.

KC | **Now let's turn to the world of men. Right from the first book, it gets mentioned because it's Siegfried's goal to find his own kind. But you only show us a single image of it.**

AA | Yes: the veil when the dragon talks about it to Siegfried. It's a horizon, never attained. The story remains in the world of myth.

KC | **As a result, the tale cannot leave the mythic world, or else you'd lose the universality you're after.**

AA | Exactly! Actually, there is another image of the world of men, seen from afar, in the last two pages. Which allows me to end the book on the image of a ring.

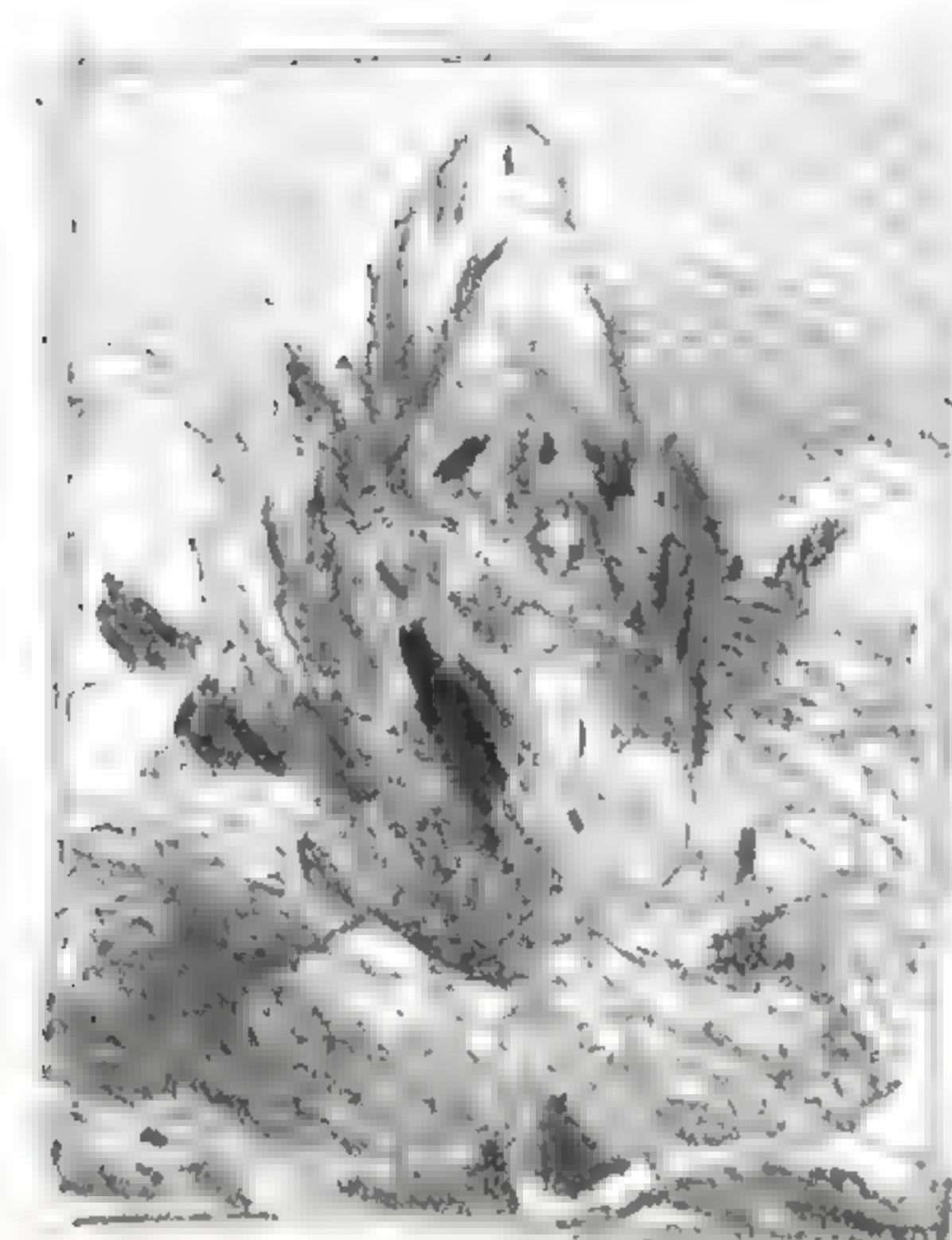




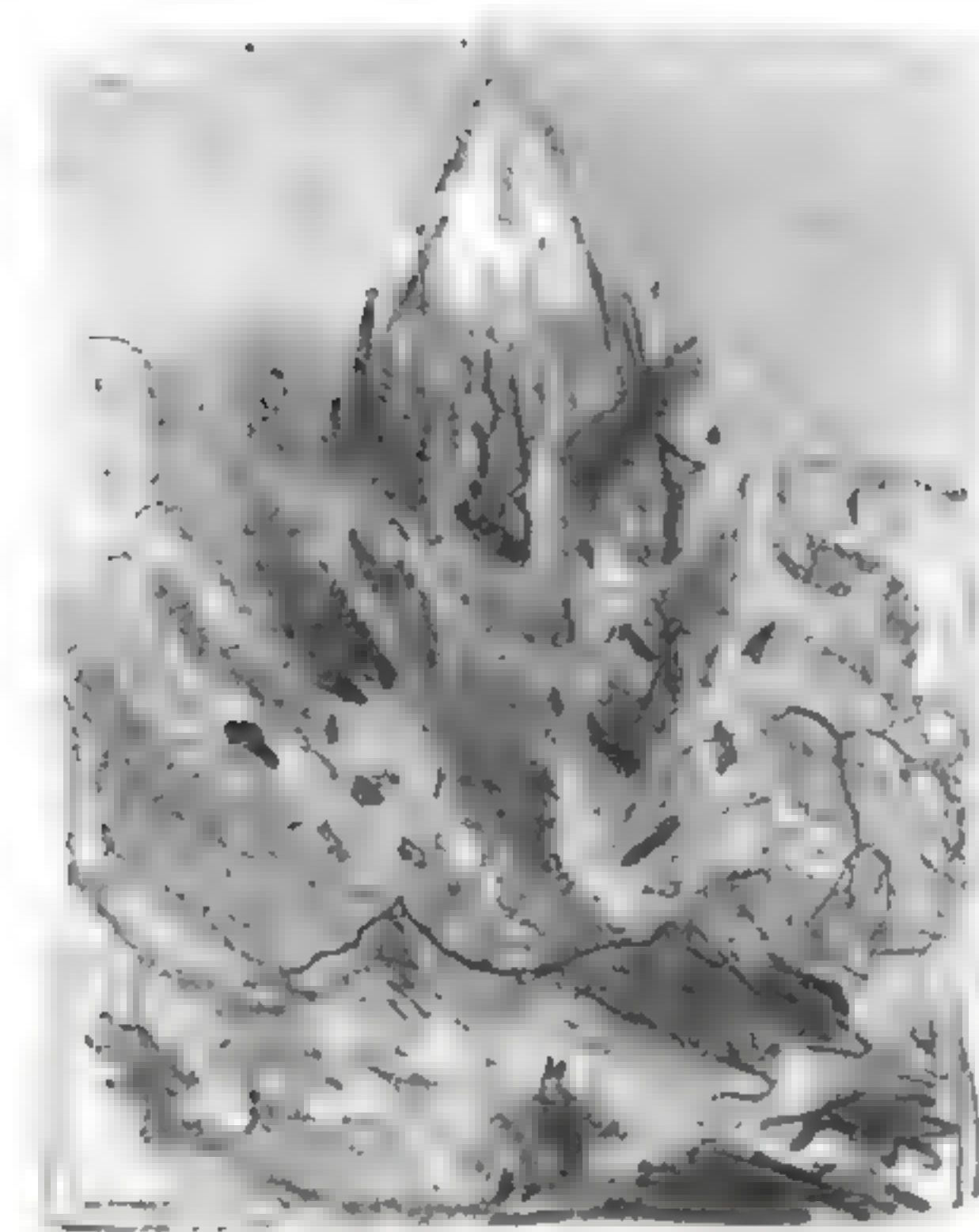


(PAGE 128) SIEGFRIED VS. ODIN. Preliminary pencil roughs. One of the first images ever made for Siegfried, 24 x 32 cm.

(OPPOSITE) Pose study for Siegfried by Alex Hesse.



(I)



(II)



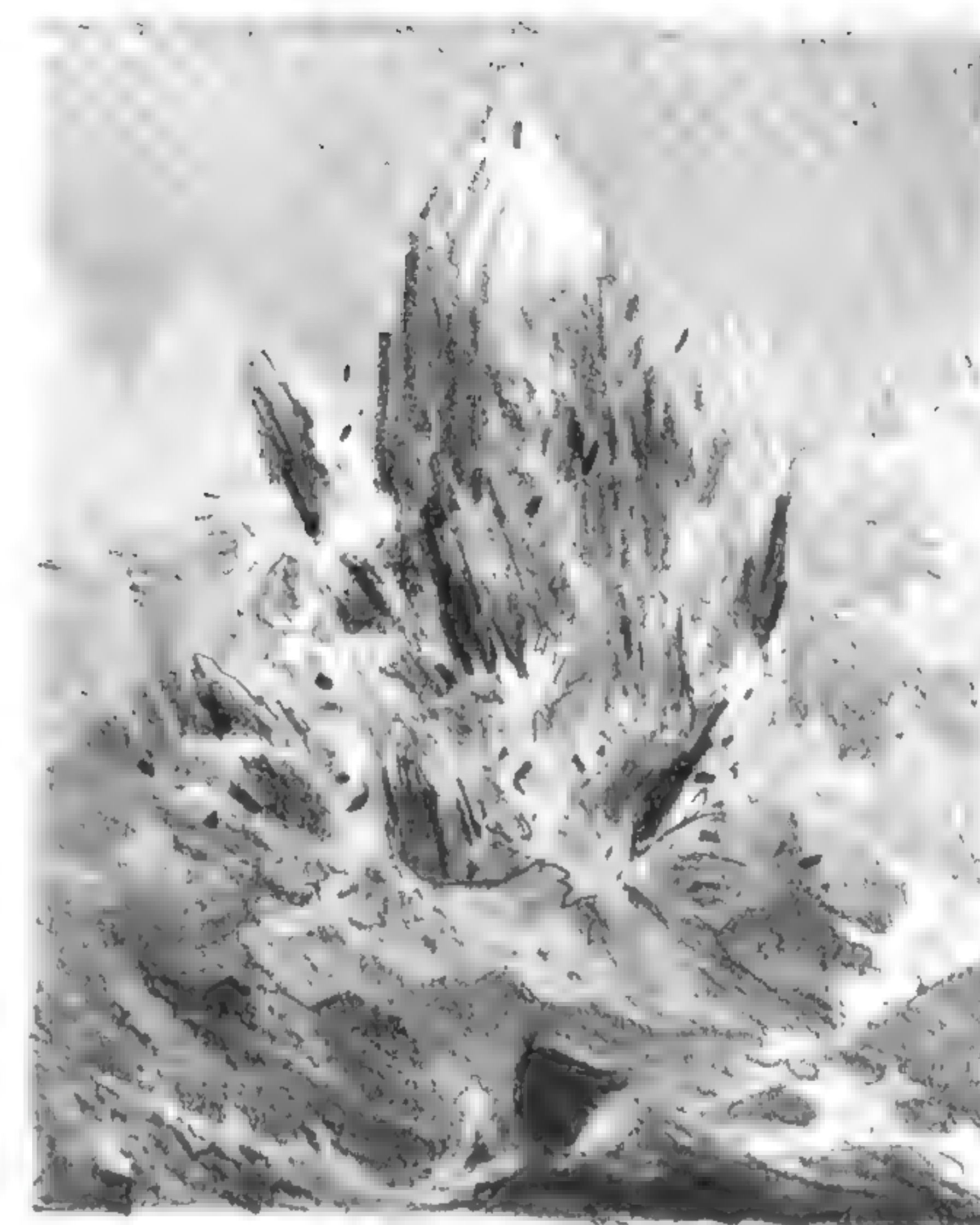
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THE FALL OF VALHALLA.

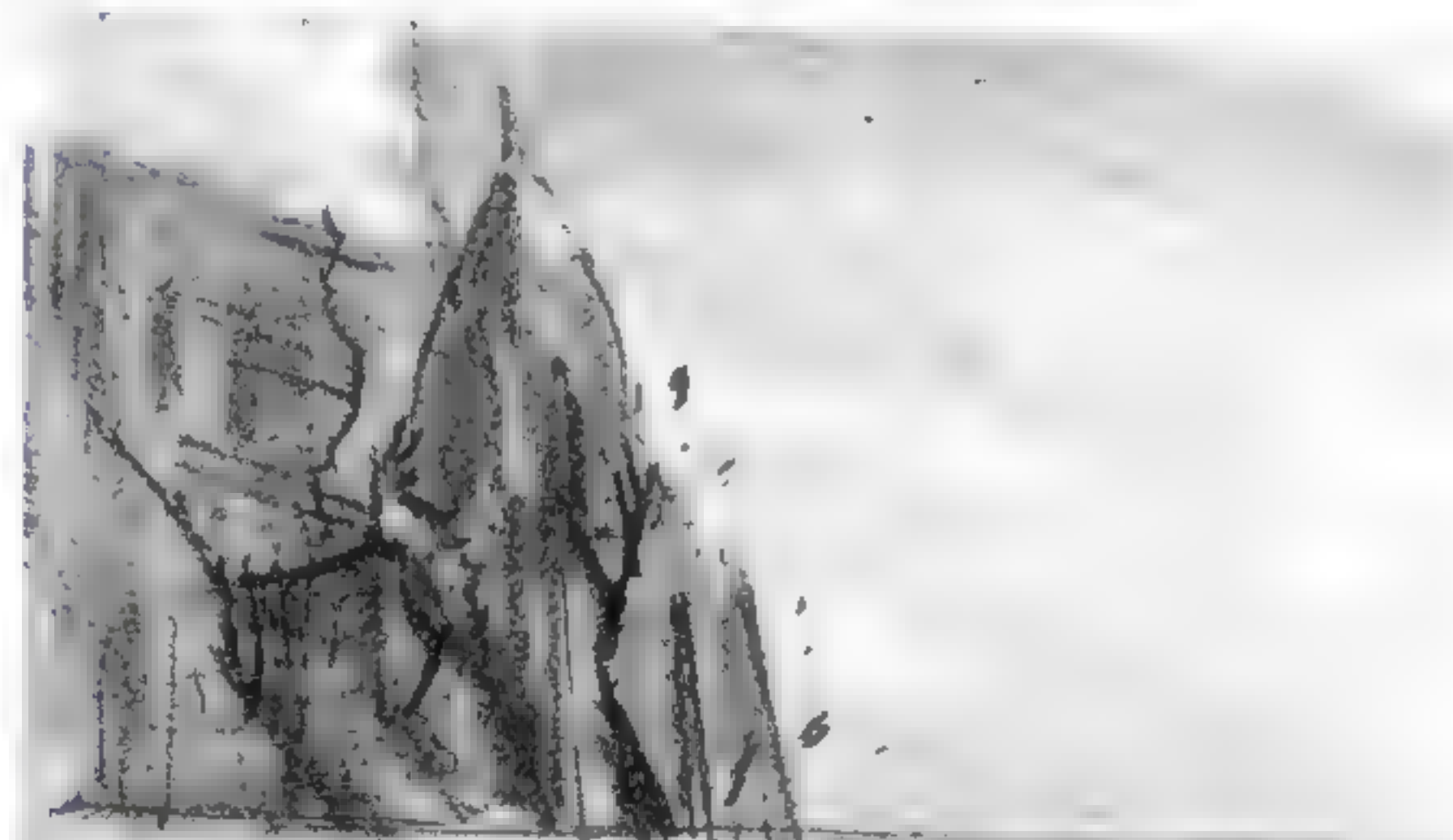
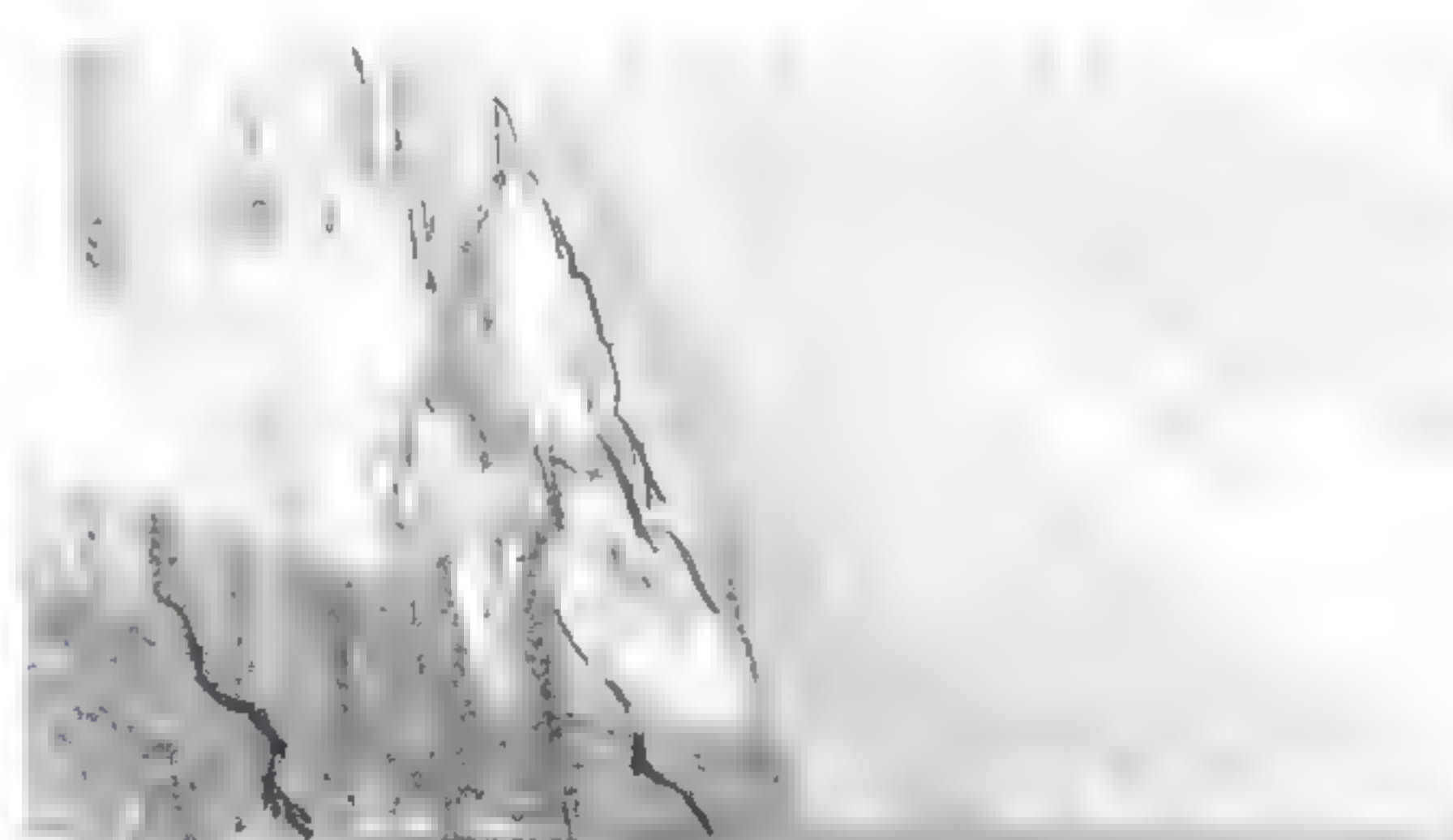
(I-IV) Compositional studies for page 129.

(V) Background studies for the movie, watercolor, 50 x 65 cm.

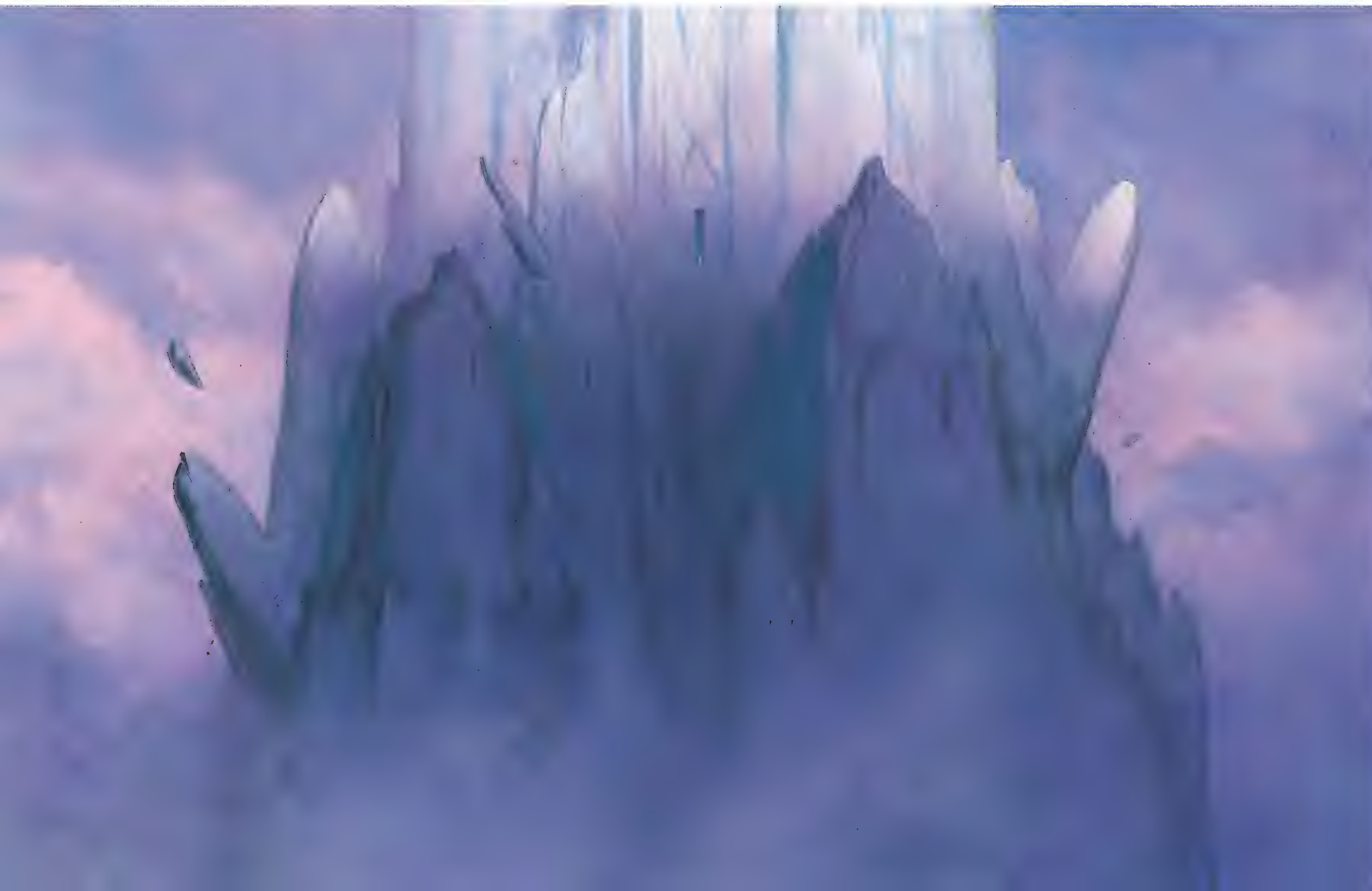
(VI) Storyboard from the movie.



(IV)



(VI)



(V)



(I)



(II)



(III)



KC | Since you brought up the ring...in your story, and in the dialogue, a certain number of concepts get incarnated. Gold, Love, the Law, Fear, Death: where are these from?

AA | From Wagner's *Ring*, where they're explicitly mentioned. The Gold is another name for the ring. The Law is incarnated in Odin's lance. Fear, whom Siegfried ignores... even if I draw from the ancient sources of the myth, I often come back to Wagner's reading: powerful, complex, modern in form. That's why I liked it, and what I tried to hold onto from it, all the way through.

KC | You've been working on this story for ten years. I saw all the steps the script went through, and the work you accomplished. You got over lots of blocks and hesitations: how did you stay tuned in for so long to a feeling for what you were doing?

AA | Music is a marvelous receptacle for pure feeling. The emotions I wanted to convey were all in there, I just had to go back again and again. I've seen the opera on stage several times. I went to see *Götterdämmerung* as I was finishing up Book III. It helped me rediscover the poignant side of the end of the gods. I redid the storyboard of the end after getting back from the theatre.

But your ear can get used to a song, your feelings can grow dulled by familiarity. So there are certain works I keep in reserve, as if in a safe at the heart of which emotions can be preserved intact. I do this with certain passages from the *Ring* cycle, but also with a lied by Richard Strauss, for example: *Im Abendrot*. "In the darkening evening, two birds vanish into the horizon..." Strauss wrote it toward the end of his life. For the end of *Twilight of the Gods*, I envisioned a great, empty, reddening sky and two birds flying off...the end of the story...



(I) **THE FOOTHILLS AFLAME.** Atmosphere study, watercolor and white gouache on gray paper, 6 x 8 cm

(II) **THE END OF A WORLD.** Atmosphere study, Photoshop.



Wir sind durch Not und Freude
Gegangen Hand in Hand,
Vom Wandern ruhen wir beide
Nun überm stillen Land.

Rings sich die Täler neigen,
Es dunkelt schon die Luft,
Zwei Lerchen nur noch steigen
Nachträumend in den Duft.

Tritt her und laß sie schwirren,
Bald ist es Schlafenszeit,
Daß wir uns nicht verirren
In dieser Einsamkeit.

O weiter, stiller Friede!
So tief im Abendrot,
Wie sind wir wandermüde –
Ist das etwa der Tod?

We have through joy and sorrow
gone together, hand in hand;
And now we rest from wandering
in this quiet land.

The valleys slope around us
the skies are growing dark.
Dreaming, in the fragrant breeze
rise two larks.

Come close, and let them fly.
Soon it will be time for sleep.
Let us not lose our way
in this solitude.

O vast, tranquil peace,
so deep in the evening's glow!
How weary we are of wandering--
Could this perchance be death?

(Words by Joseph von Eichendorff,
Music by Richard Strauss)





IN THE FORGE

After the preceding pages, mostly devoted to writing, I now invite you to come with me behind the scenes for a journey through the creation of *Siegfried*, from script to printed page.

In the two years of production on *Twilight of the Gods*, I was lucky enough to set my drawing board down at the heart of the three cradles of comics: America, Japan, and France. A chance to find new inspiration for *Siegfried*, and also to meet new artists confronted, as I was, with the infinite options of digital creation, and audiences confounded by its uses.

Despite, or perhaps because of the ease computers bring us, it seems to me that manual work with paper and pigments exerts a growing fascination.

These are the materials I chose for *Siegfried*, so watch out for ink stains, and welcome to the making-of...

Interview by *Éric Chauveau.*

III IN THE FORGE

PROCESS

Over the years, I've developed a way of working. I go through a series of discrete stages that help me pick apart problems, in order to solve them as early as possible, preferably before I really start working on the page—the part of the process that takes the most time.

First I work on the script on my computer, in an iterative process of ever-increasing detail, from synopsis to full treatment. Then I move on to dialogue, which I write out longhand. I cross out, rewrite, cut, rearrange...When I'm stuck on dialogue, it's usually because there's a flaw in the script: the stakes aren't clear, the characters in an expository scene lack sufficient motivation, etc. When the scene is clear, writing dialogue is a pleasure. Once I'm satisfied with a draft, I write out a clean copy. Usually I improve on the wording as I do so. That's one of the advantages of writing longhand: it takes a long time, which gives you time to think about what you're writing.

I base my initial layouts upon the resulting document. Using a system of annotations, I divide the story into panels, the panels into rows, and the rows into pages. With experience, I've come to know fairly well how much fits on a page. This system allows me to tinker with certain scenes before drawing them.

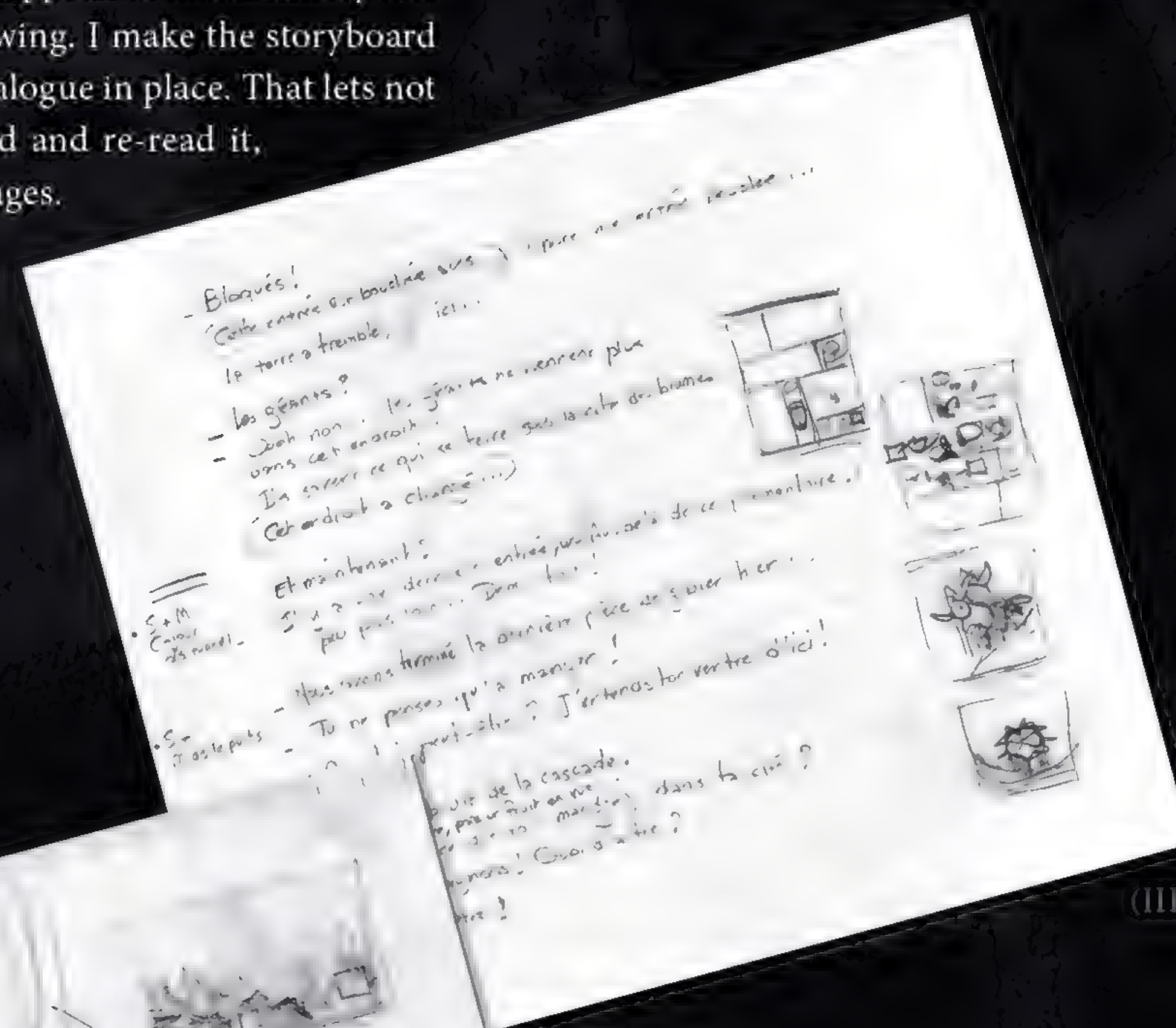
Before I start drawing, I rough out the layouts—in other words, the very structure of the page. It's a very fast process—I average about ten per minute—and it really helps out with the next stage in the process, which is storyboarding. *Siegfried* was mapped out in its entirety this way, before I even started drawing. I make the storyboard as readable as possible with dialogue in place. That lets not only me but other people read and re-read it, get some distance, make changes. It doesn't take long, and it helps me ensure the quality of the book before I even start drawing.

(PAGE 134) COVER FOR BOOK I (Discarded).

- (I) Layouts for pages 16-17.
- (II) Study for Mime's forge and book title placement.
- (III) Layouts for pages 10-11 (deleted scene).
- (IV) Layout for page 78.
- (V) Pencils for page 78.



(IV)



(III)



(V)

Finishing a book takes me one to two years, but if you figure in other projects going on at the same time, I've been working on this particular story for ten years, which is a real luxury. It's allowed me to immerse myself deeply in the story, to be involved in every last detail. But it also creates an enormous gap between authorial and reader time. In this gap—a single page can take two to four days to finish—the danger is losing sight of the big picture, going astray and, from being too

close to the material, no longer being able to judge your own work. So storyboards are of capital importance to me. In this stage the book is still in flux; major changes can still be made to the story. This is also the first pictorial stage: quick, spontaneous, very fresh, especially where characters' expressions are concerned. Capturing these, getting them down, makes every stage to come easier and more right.

IN THE FORGE

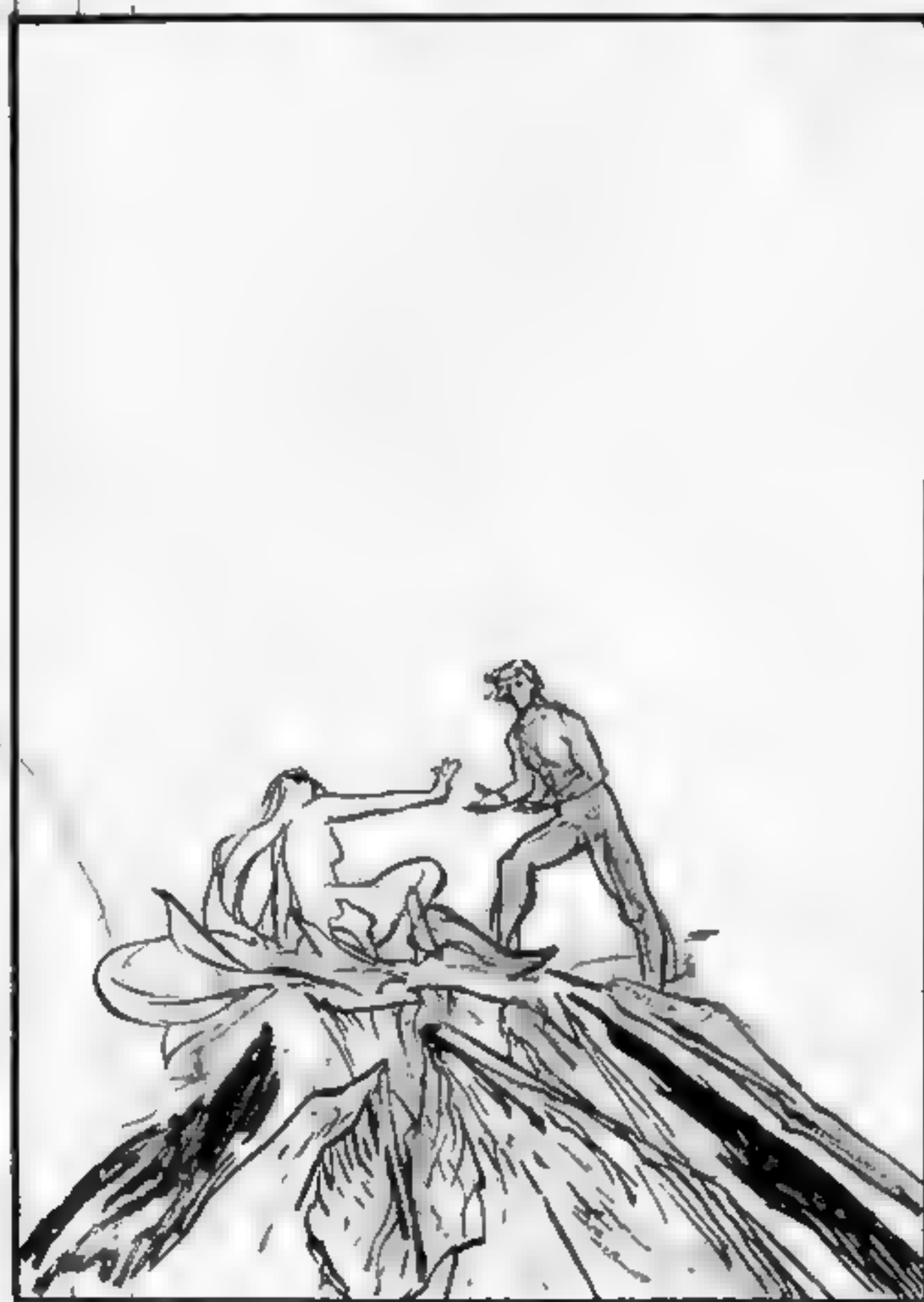
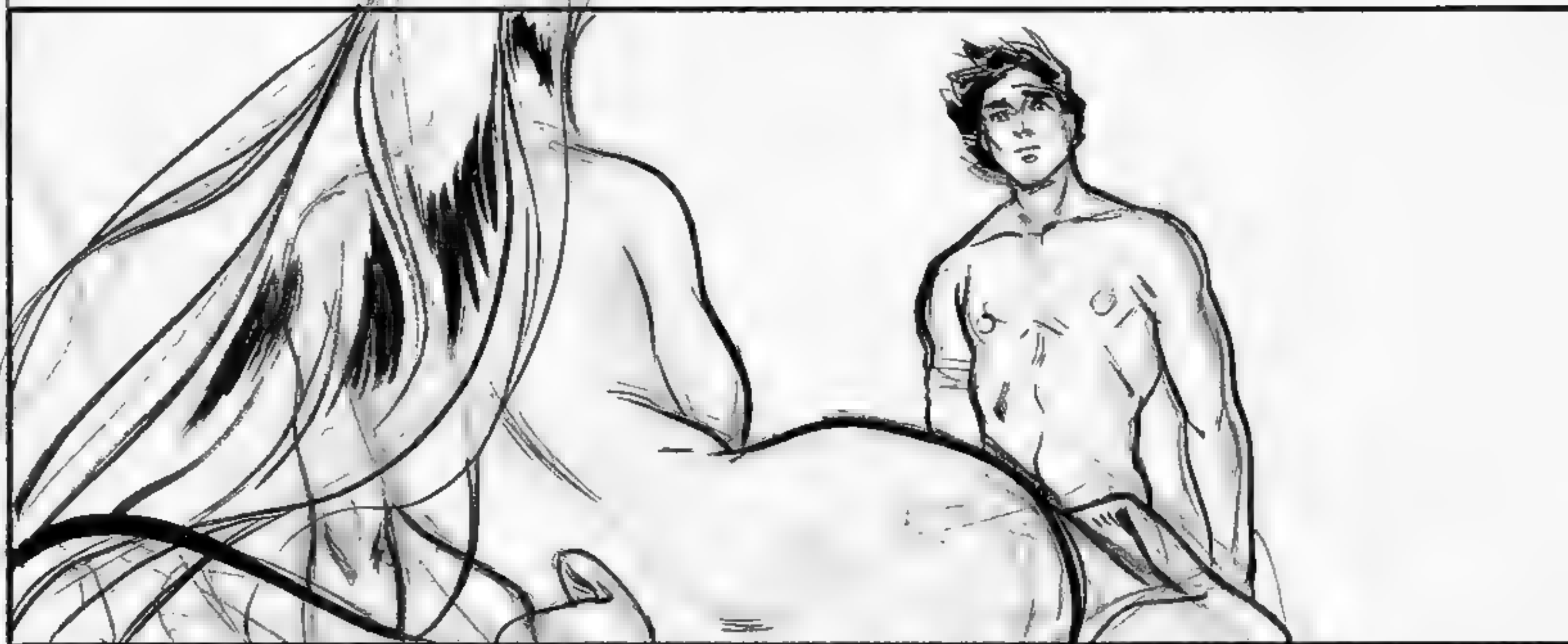
Before starting in on pencils, I always decide where the speech balloons will go first. The special magic of comics has a lot to do with how words and images interact. It's a very subtle balance, one I can't ever get right unless I have the words right in front of me, in the balloon, while I'm drawing. Even the shape of the balloon, or its "tail," can have character—set the tone, lend dialogue inflection. A line can hesitate and tremble, or be precise and deliberate. For instance, check out the contrast between the Völva's "balloon tails"—intertwined patterns suggesting plans within plans—and those of Odin, which are straight and forthright.

Next, I get down to drawing. Fast. If I don't like it, I don't push it; I erase and start over. I don't correct pencils. I used to go at it really hard, work it over until I wore through the paper. Now I more or less focus on what I want to do. I try to keep a picture of the page as a whole in my head... and then I move quickly, trying to nail it on the first take. If I don't like the result, I step back a bit... then start again with clear eyes.

For inking, I use a brush (Windsor & Newton Series 7, Number 1), and sometimes a pen for certain backgrounds. I correct with white gouache, and I have no scruples about using patches and various collages. The quality of the ink is of the utmost importance (I use Dr. Ph. Martin's Black Star, matte).

Inking with a brush requires a certain level of experience, which no tips or tricks can replace: the brush is very supple, demanding a certain dexterity. And inking forces you to define your lines, your forms—at the risk of losing some of the original pencils' softer, looser charm, and making the page more sterile, less interesting. But inks are a language that suit comics: simple, immediate, easily read. It's worth mastering!

I work on the page at a steady rhythm, pencils then inks. If all goes well, it's done by day's end. I set it aside—always with an eye to getting as much critical distance as possible—and move on to something else. My golden rule: always re-read with brush and pen in hand, in order to immediately correct whatever leaps out at me.





For coloring, I use watercolor ink—Colorex, which can be erased with bleach. I do what's called coloring "on gray": the black and white page—on paper you can't color—is reproduced in gray on watercolor paper (Sennelier satin finish, very smooth). It also gets off-printed in black on a transparency that I can place it over the gray in order to get a look at something very close to the final result.

I start by protecting the white spaces with Scotch painter's tape along the margins and drawing gum for the speech balloons and other details in the drawing.

Watercoloring on gray is the best of all worlds: the inks remain readable and the magic of colors very real, unlike in digital coloring, where you don't get to decide. Colors don't always react the way you want, and it's wonderful, a real pleasure! The materials interact and create something new; you concentrate on the harmonies. Of course, it can also be dangerous. No "undo" command! In the worst case scenario, you can correct with bleach or start over with another gray, but when it's going well, you ride it out. It makes the process more intense, there's always the chance you'll mess up, which

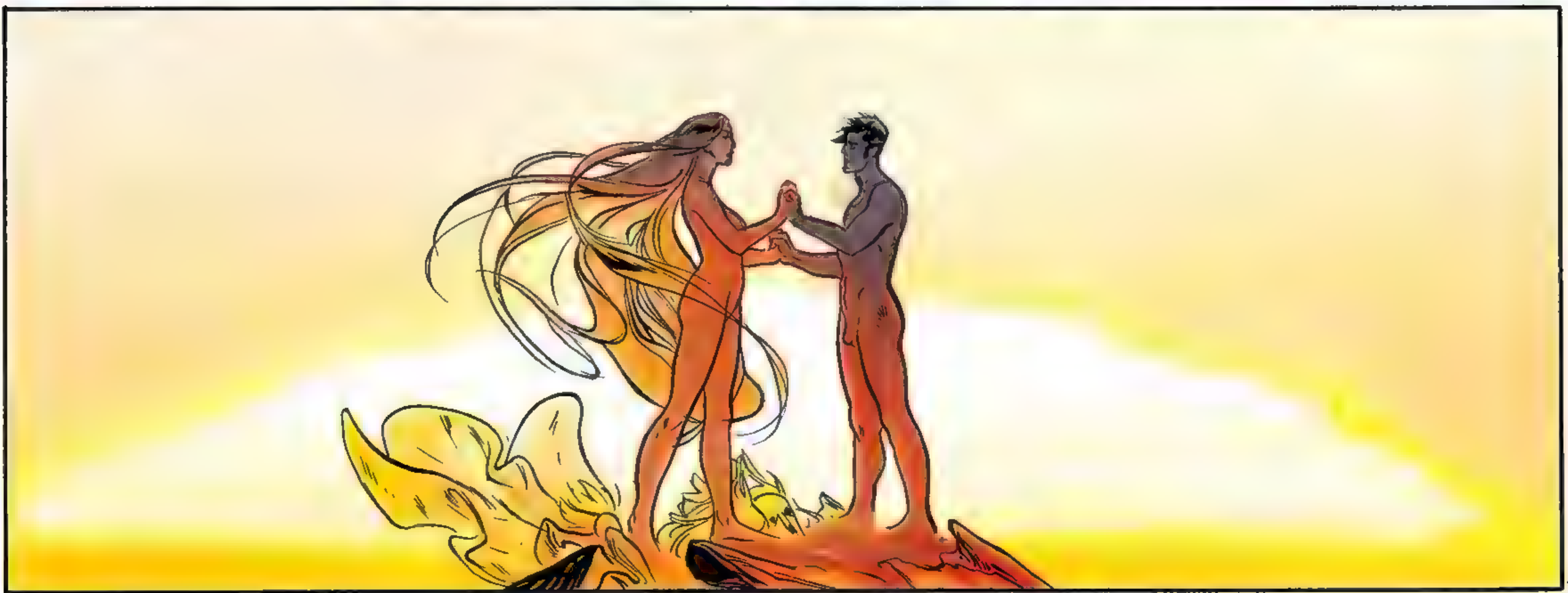
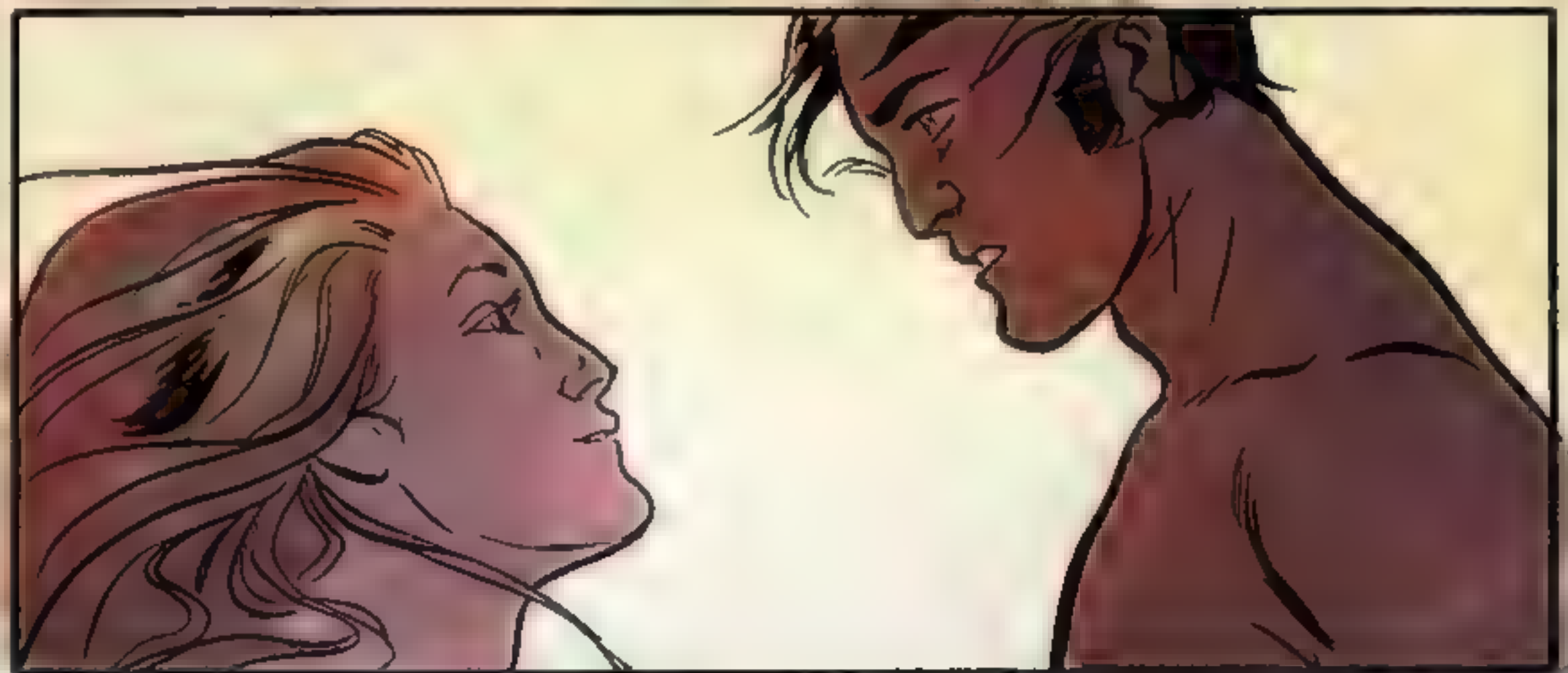
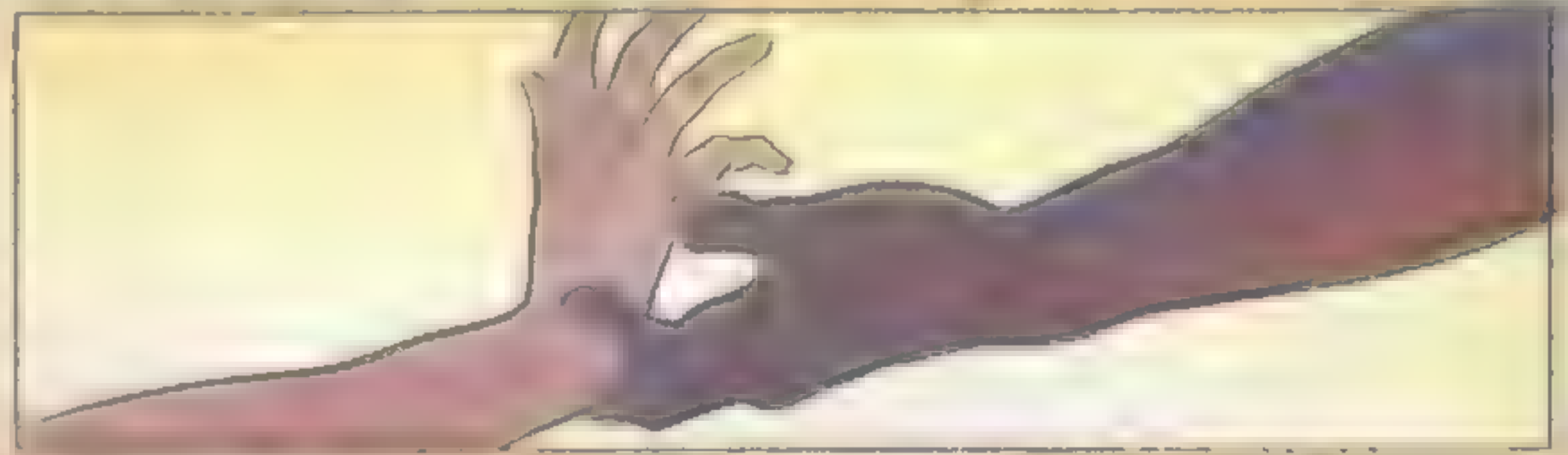
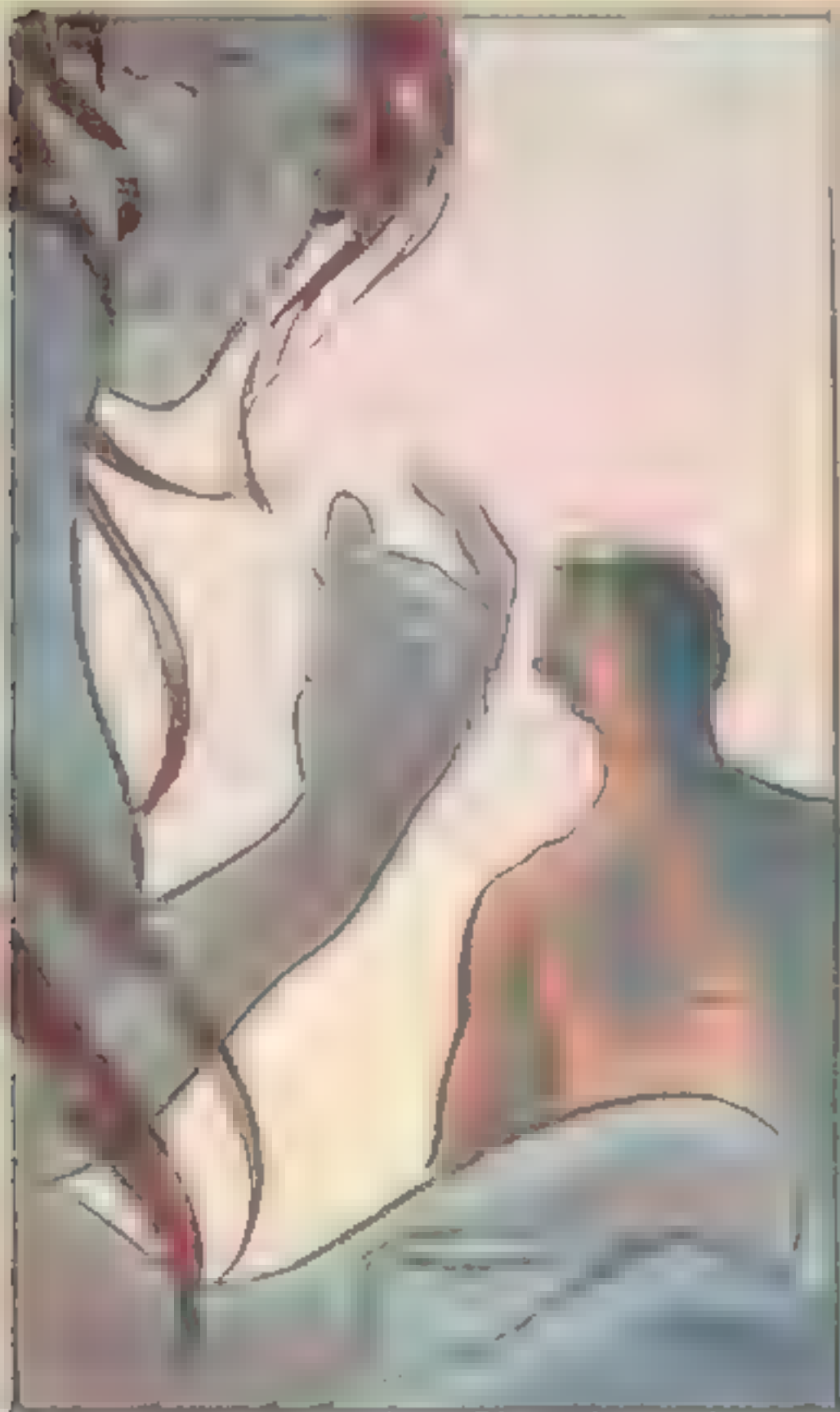
makes it even more satisfying when you pull it off—much more satisfying than saving a computer document.

And so the page exists at last. All that's left is a few technical steps (scanning, integration, digital test prints) before sending it off to the printer. I always oversee the setting. Sometimes there are more choices to be made, final decisions, which only the creator can make. After so much work, it seems important to see things through to the end.



I THE FAIL OF VALHALLA. Atmosphere studies for page 73, watercolor, 15 x 40 cm

II This page is a montage of the different steps involved in coloring: the rough "gray" is reproduced on watercolor paper, then protected by tape, then watercolored in successive layers, and finally covered by a transparency bearing the inks



78.

IN THE FORGE



SCULPTURES

Though I feel no calling for sculpting as a separate medium, sometimes I make use of sculptures while designing a character. It helps me think about volume in a concrete way, spot flaws more easily, and simplify, purify. I used these two busts as models for covers (I didn't keep the one of Odin). I usually use oils for these portraits, a technique where having a specific reference to paint from helps a lot.

III IN THE FORGE

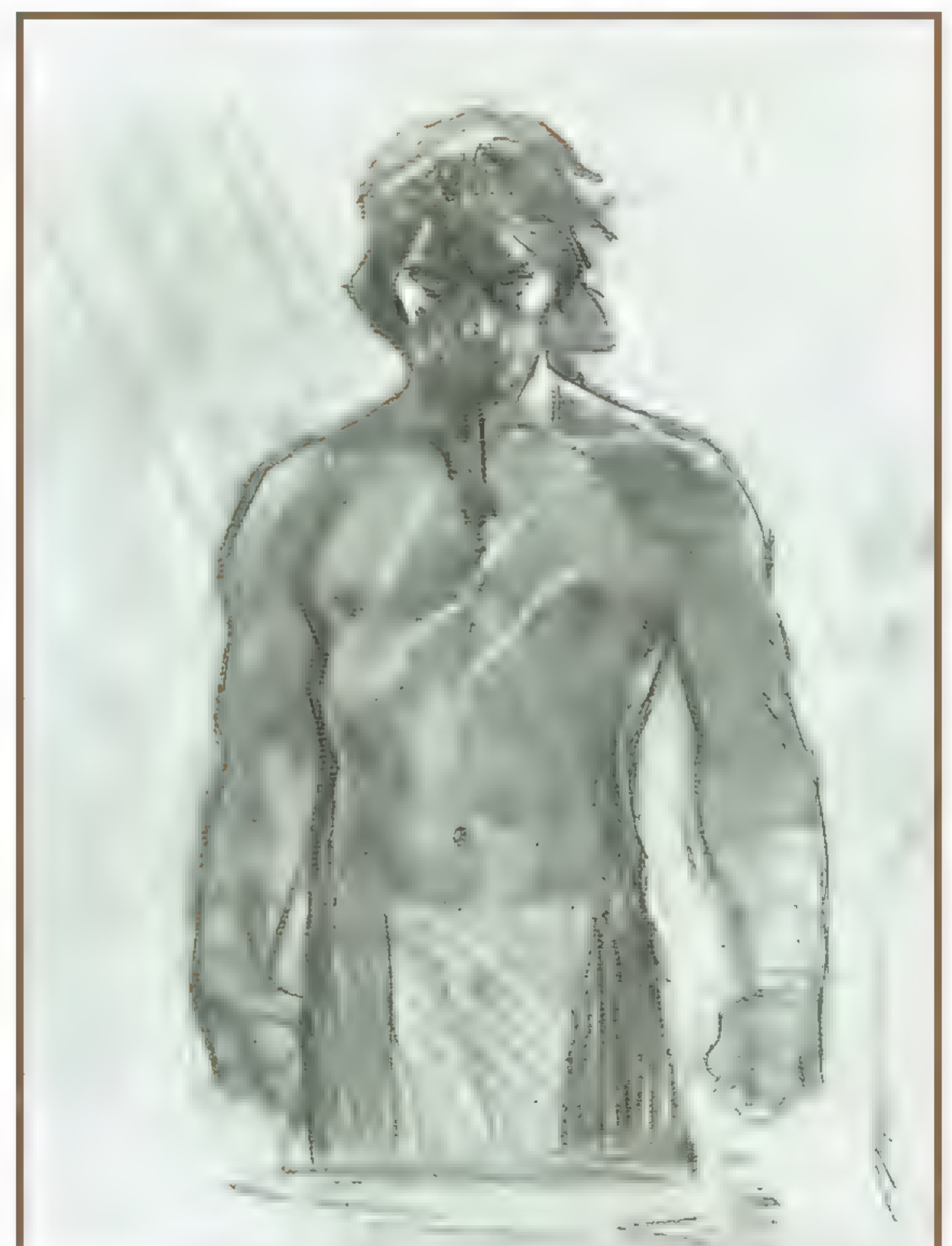
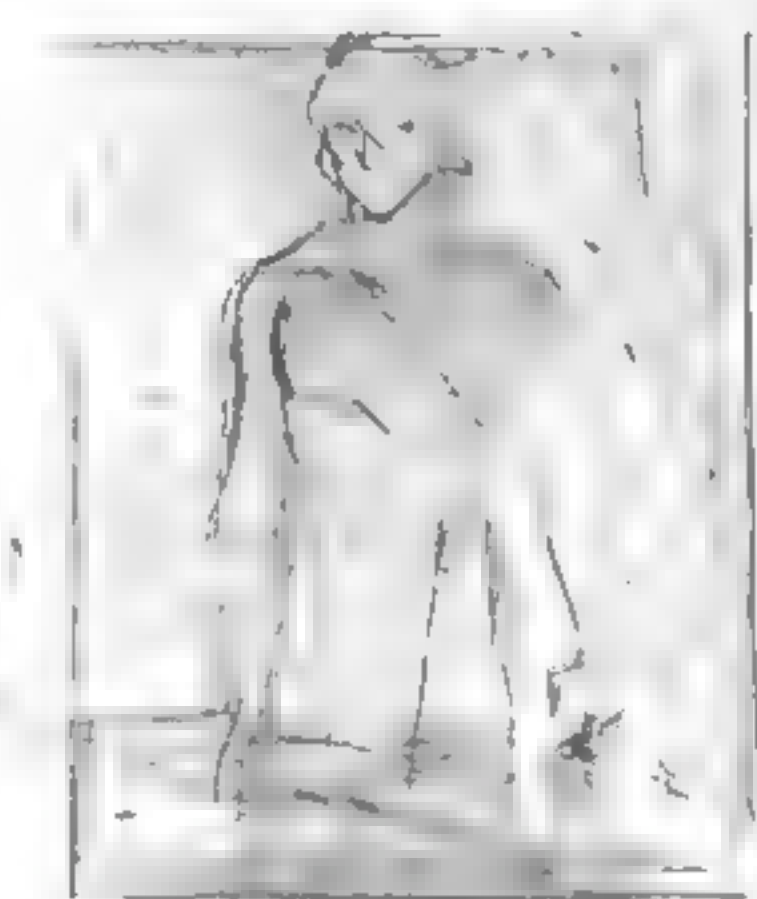
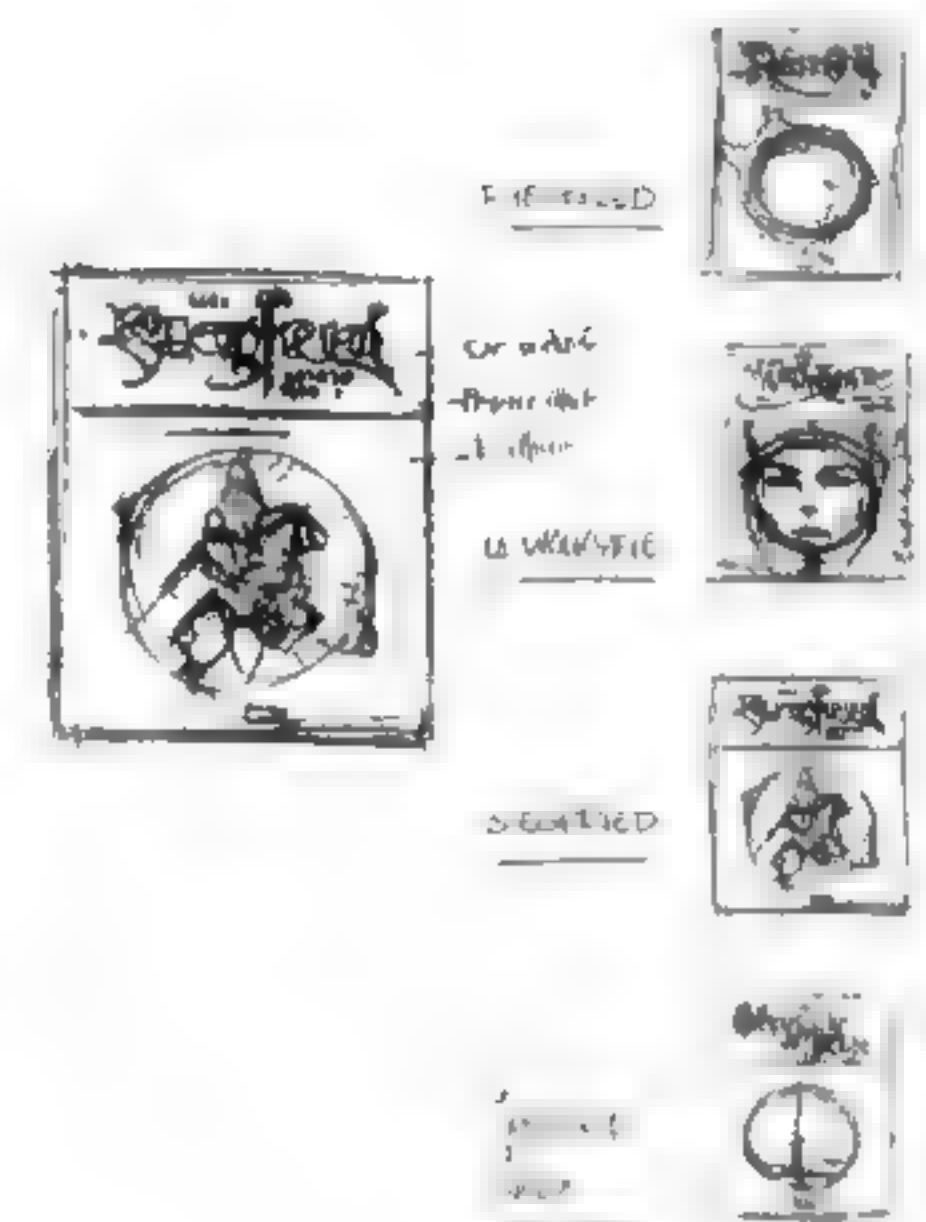
COVERS

Along with the title, the cover is one of those things that defines a book. It is decisive, a reader's first impression. The illustration must be eye-catching, but also reveal some essential facet of the story. I give this element a lot of attention, and sometimes develop it before starting on the book itself. Usually, the final cover imposes itself, becomes an obvious choice. But not always, and rarely at first. For *Twilight of the Gods*, I pursued six different possibilities. Each seemed convincing at first, but then a better idea would come up. So I kept going until the moment when I finally said, "That's it."

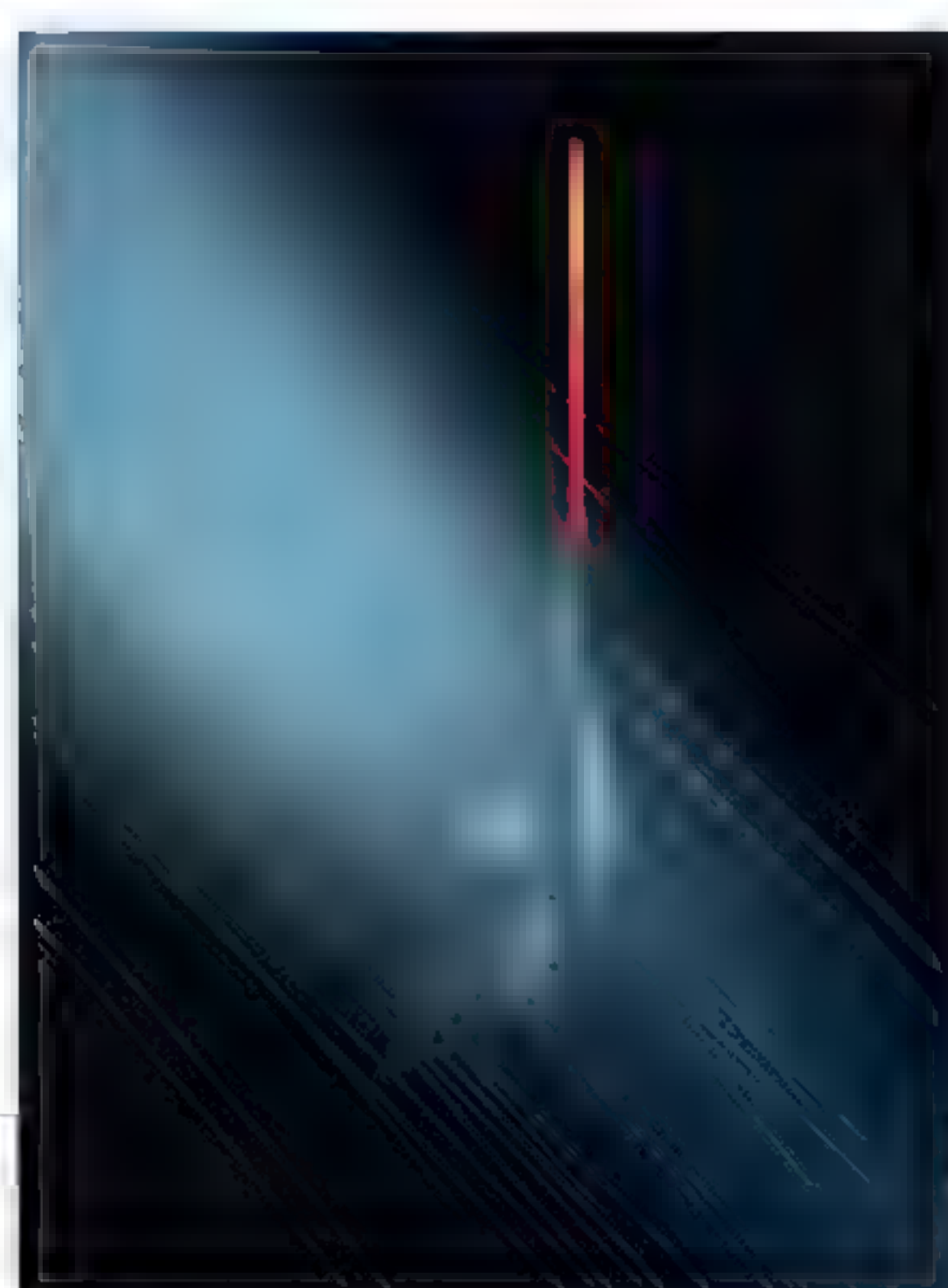
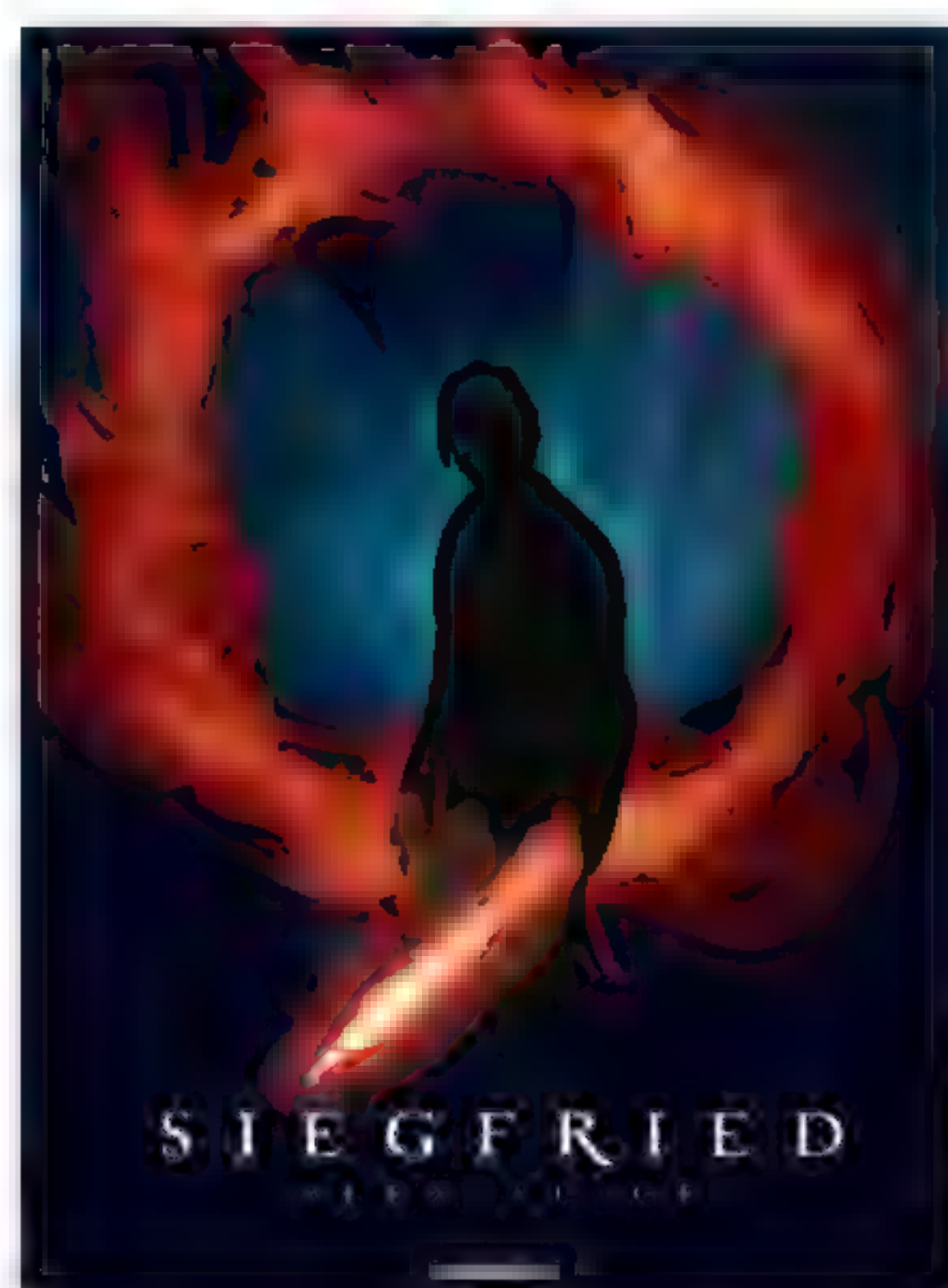
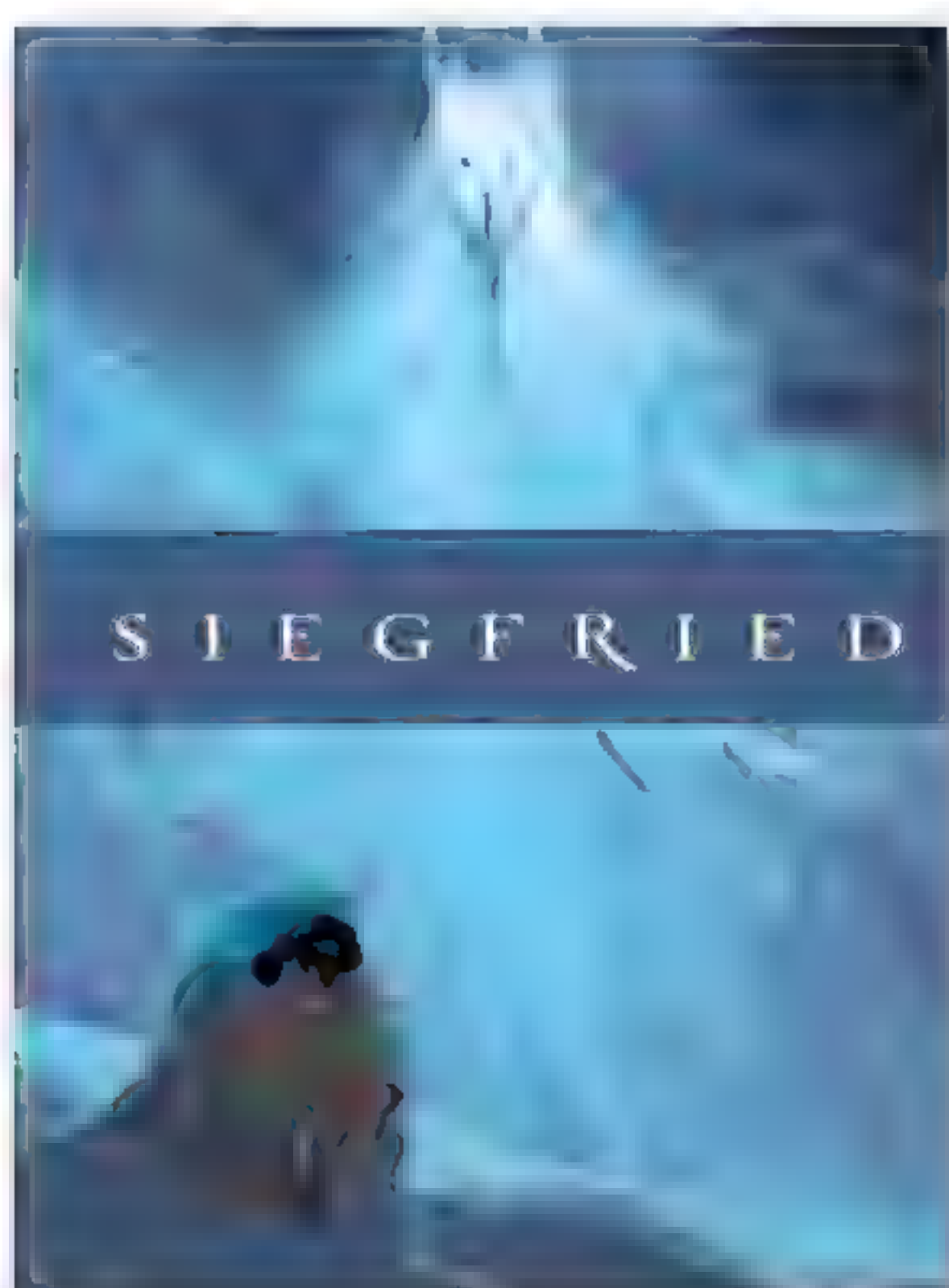
In addition to being a promise made to the reader, a cover is also a way for the creator to set a course, a goal: a promise to himself. If the cover is good, the story has to live up to it. For instance, in Book III, once I settled on the cover, I reworked the fight scene with the dragon to make it more spectacular.

Of all my books, the cover for the first *Siegfried* was without a doubt the one I had the hardest time with. At first, I wanted to show Siegfried as a child. But I soon realized I shouldn't. In the story, Siegfried grows up all at once. And as appealing as a child is, the young man he becomes is a more difficult, more violent character. The reader could be in for a nasty surprise when the character suddenly changes. Proclaiming this evolution on the cover allowed me to prevent any such disappointment, and instead create anticipation. But that also limited my choices in terms of illustrations since there are fewer pages where you see "adult" Siegfried. The most obvious choice was to show Siegfried forging his sword. So I did lots of studies on this theme, but most of the iconic ones also looked generic. In the end, I stumbled across this very simple sketch, in which character is implied by mere posture. But I dithered all the way to the end.

For the first time, my publisher convinced me to change an image. Originally, Siegfried was empty-handed, but the sword clues readers in more clearly to the genre.

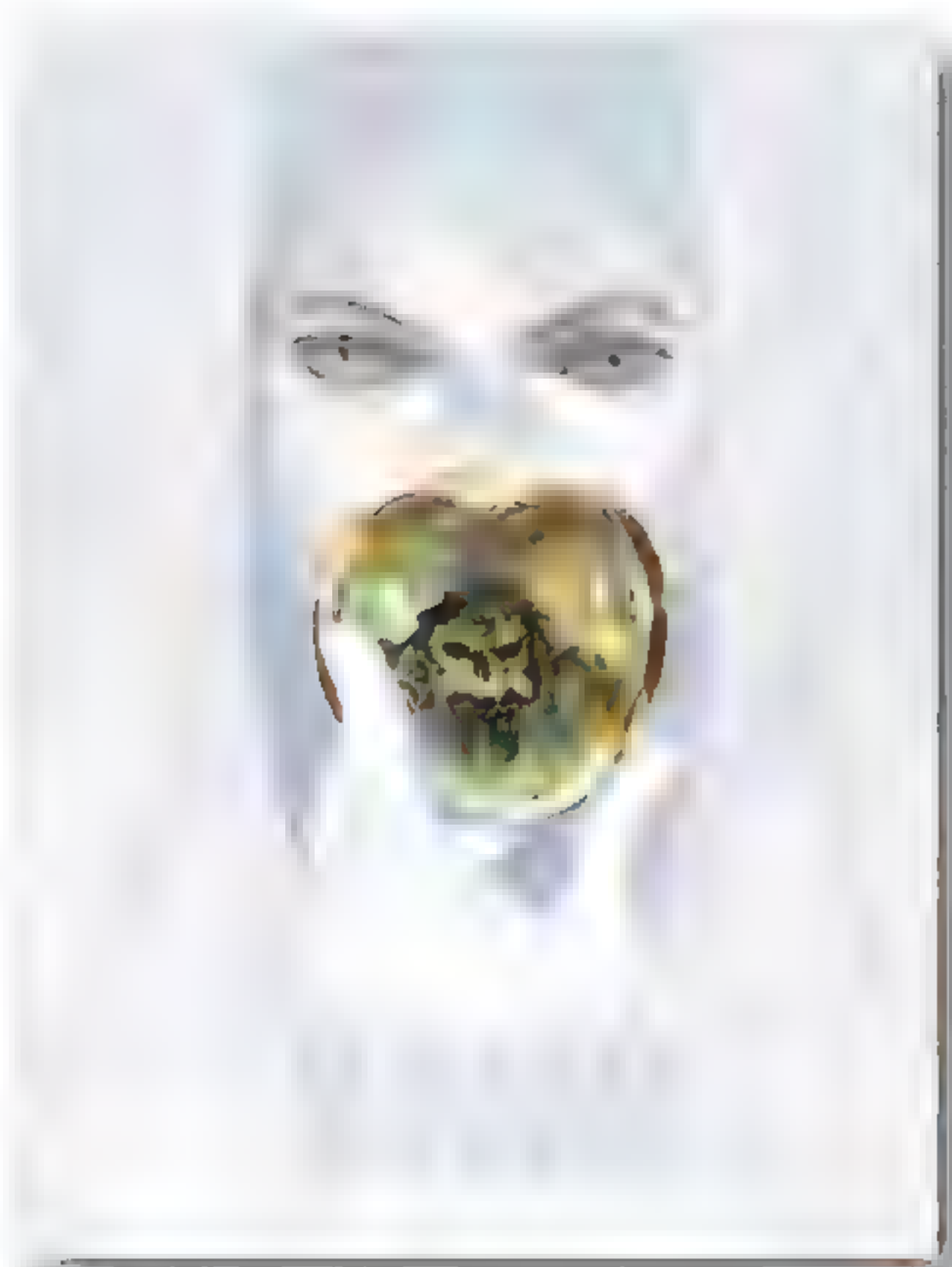


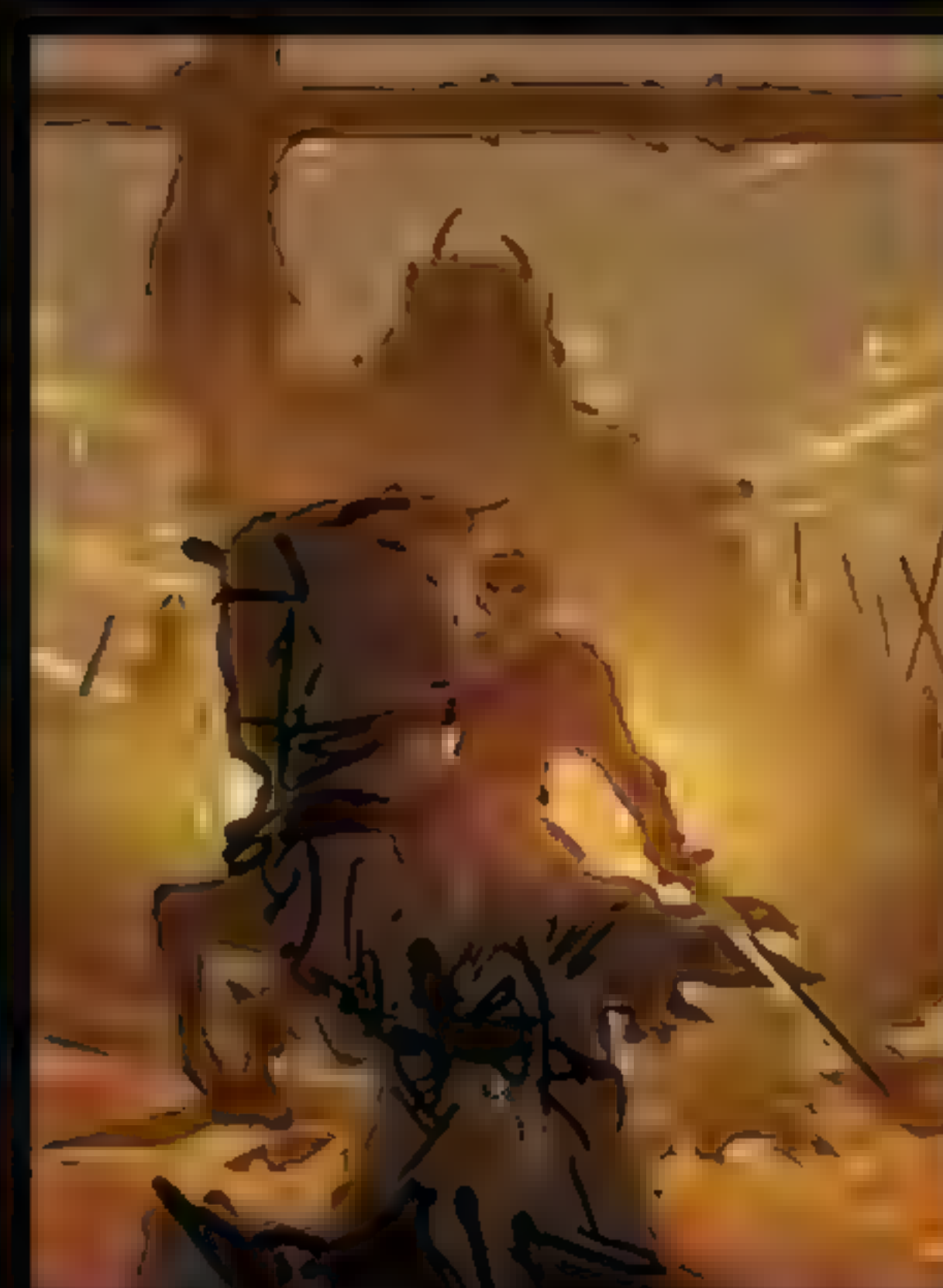
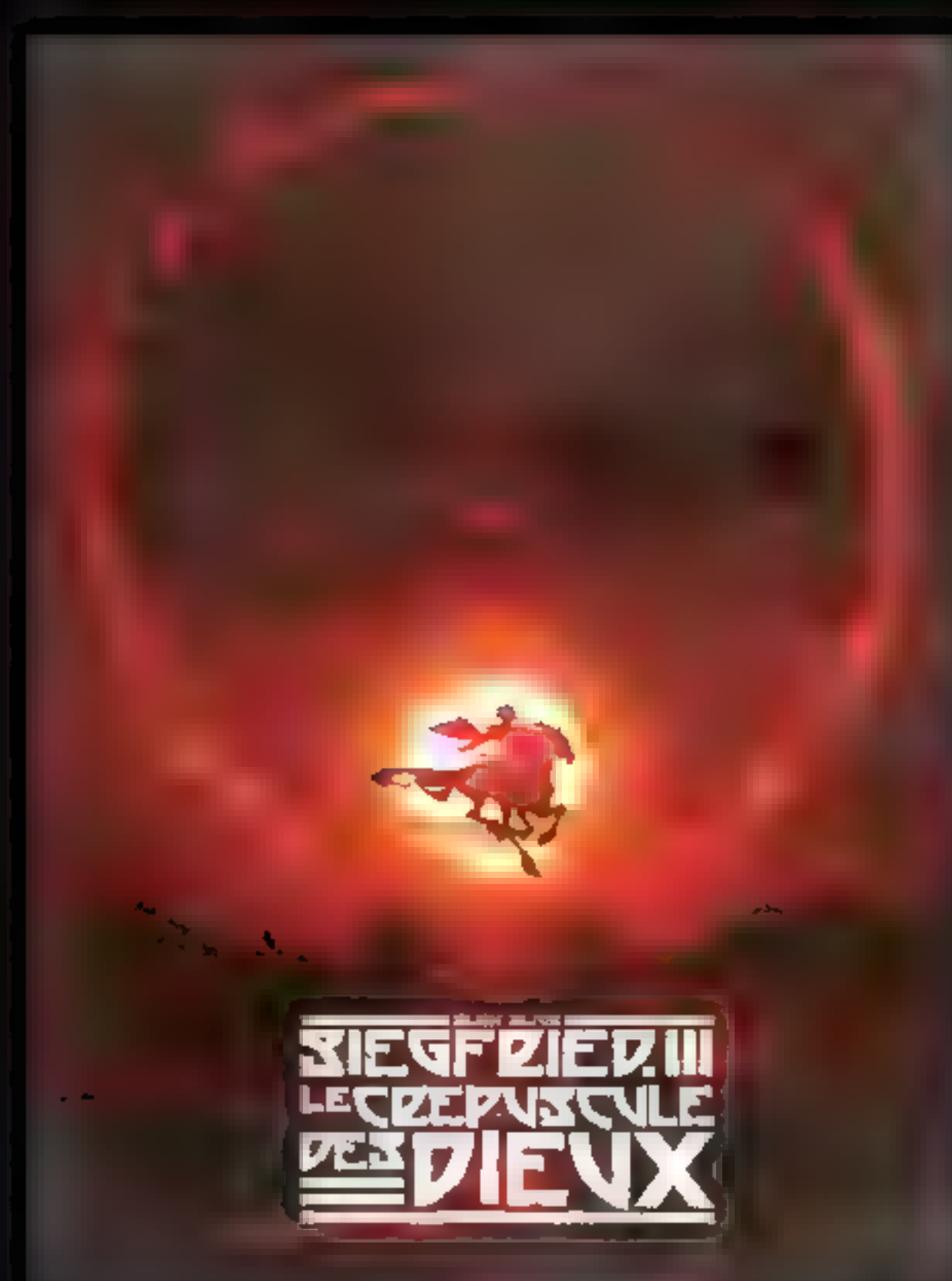




SIEGFRIED II THE VALKYRIE

Unlike Book I, the cover of *The Valkyrie* was obvious to me right from the start. So: relatively few attempts, all with the main character's face in a circle.





For *Twilight of the Gods*, I had an embarrassment of riches to choose from. First off: twilight, of course. I was very struck by Bob Peak's poster for *Apocalypse Now*—that much seems obvious. By reworking it, it gave way to the cover illustration for the special edition, which I am especially fond of. I think it speaks of mythology, melancholy, grand destiny—all in a romantic vein that really reflects what I wanted to do with this saga.

The second possibility was a giant, mural-type composition. I like this kind of thing, especially in movie posters. You can show several aspects of the story at once. Oddly enough, it never seems to work well in comics. The size of a movie poster lets you create different levels, allows it to be read at different scales, which is harder to do given the standard size of a comic.



(I) Another bias was toward showing the final scene. In this draft, I reused an image developed for the animated film.

(II) This one has an "old-school" movie poster feel to it. I like it a lot, and haven't given up on finding some use for it.

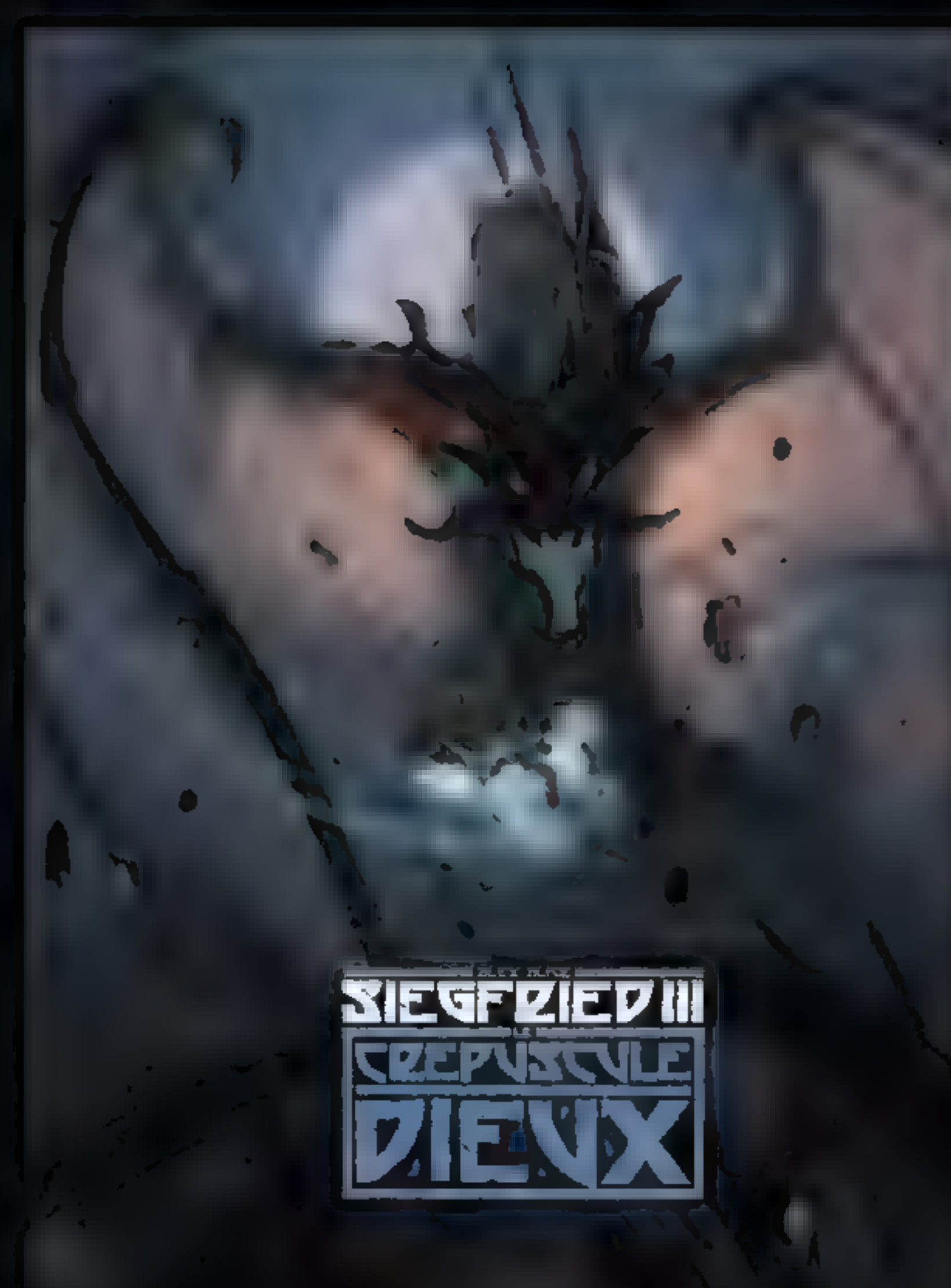
(III) The dragon, of course. I started with an image where you could see the whole thing, but I found it a bit too obvious. The angle I finally chose seemed much more evocative; we need to look further.



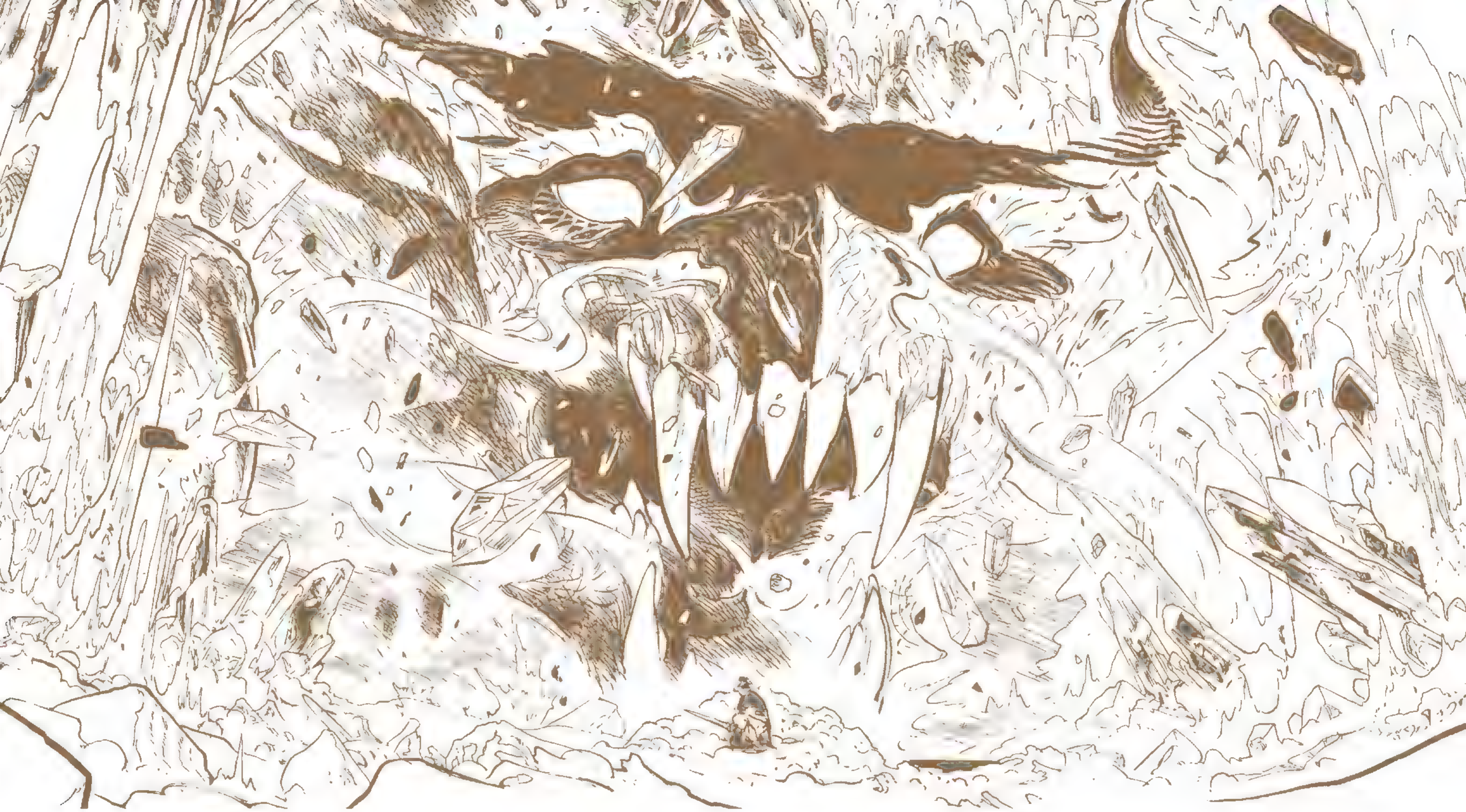
(I)



(II)



(III)



Once I've settled on a cover image, I can move on to drawing it. It all starts with a choice of technique. The work of finalizing things digitally tends to annoy me, so I turn to the two major old-fashioned ways of doing it: oil, which I used for *The Valkyrie*, or water-based media, which I used for *Siegfried* (acrylics, watercolor, pencils)

The image includes fog, rays of light, and crystals: a whole host of transparent things. I went for acrylics, which I applied in translucent layers with a brush and an airbrush. This technique allows for great precision in detail without inordinately increasing the size of the format. It was taught to me by Mathieu Lauffray, and is close to that of poster artist Drew Struzan.

The first step consists of preparing the support, in this case strong cardboard, 60 x 80 cm. I coat it with acrylic primer (gesso). The next step is separating the work in values (black and white) from the work in colors.

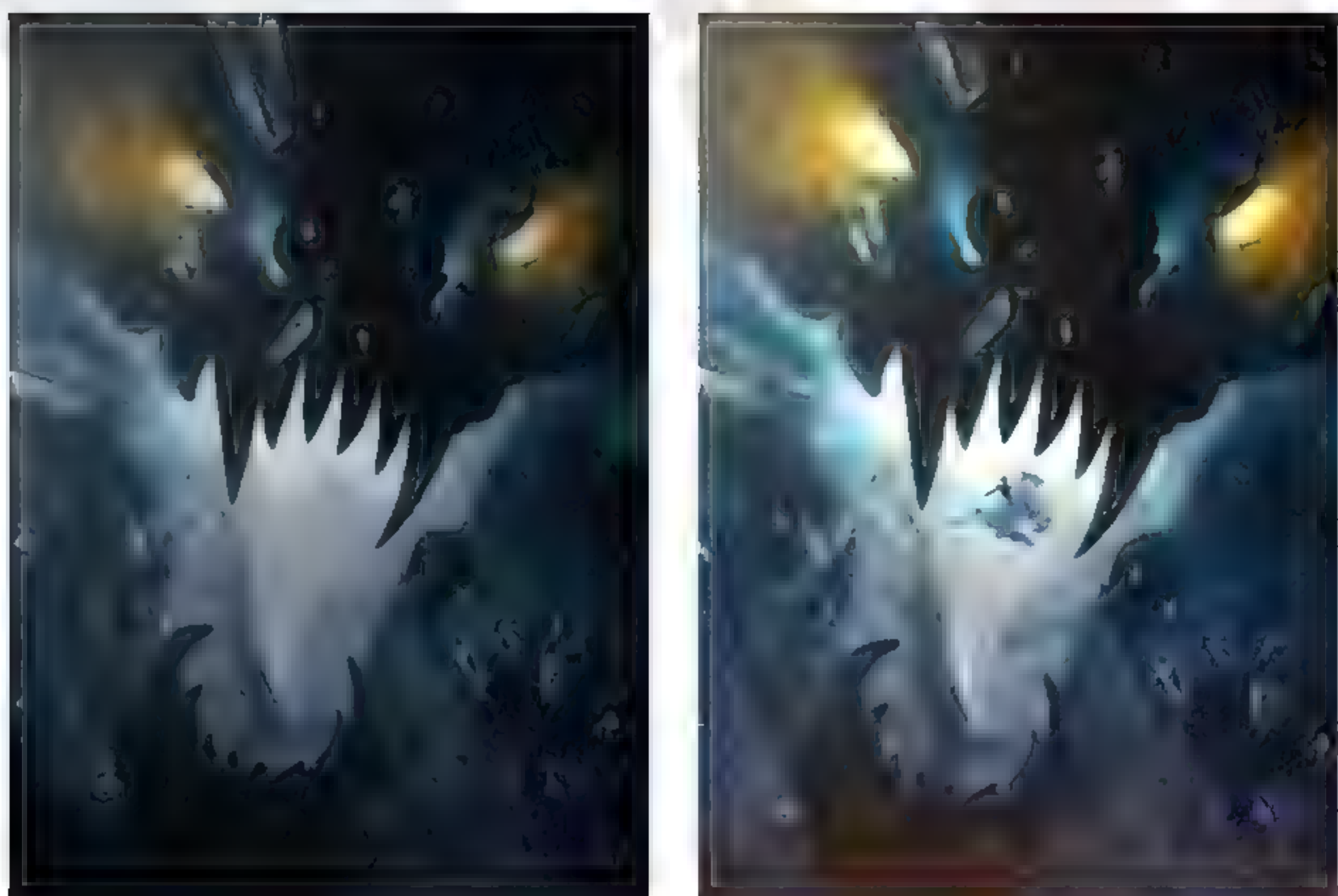
VALUES

Armed with a fairly advanced digital draft, I start by transferring the drawing to pencil. Then I start putting in the values with black paint diluted to varying degrees. Unlike oils, which are smooth and naturally beautiful, acrylic is a dry, impoverished medium. Brush, pencil, toothbrush—anything goes at this stage when it comes to creating an interesting relief surface. I can correct mistakes in the drawing, even return to the initial surface of the work by applying a new layer of gesso.



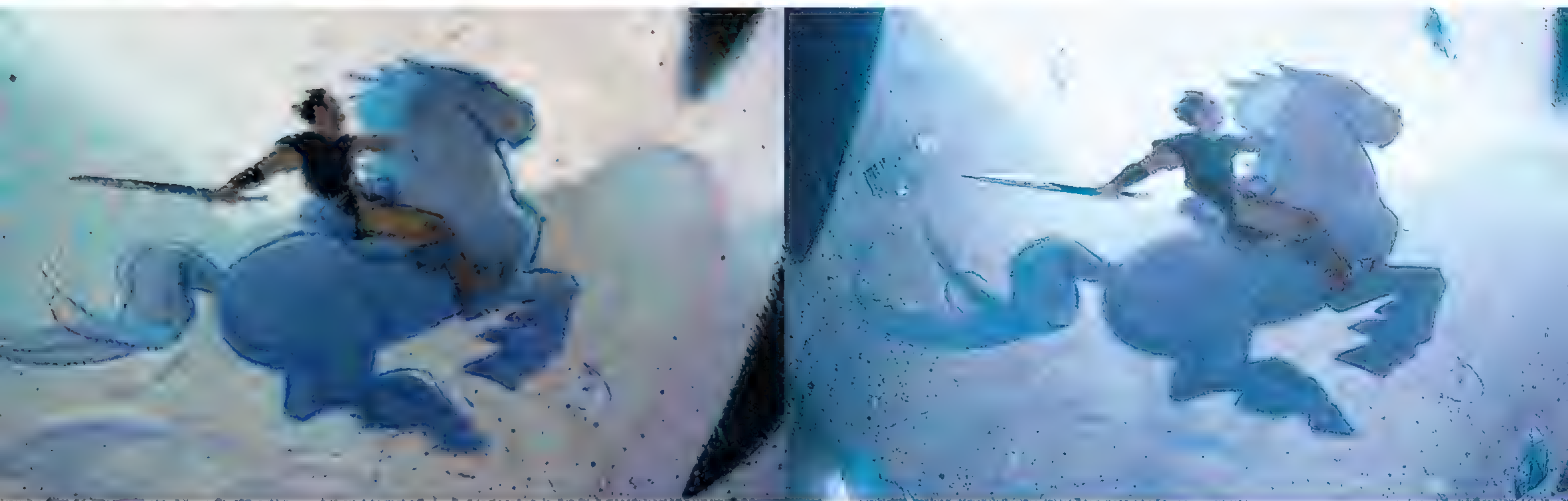
Study for composition on page 28.





COLOR

Now, I can start putting in the color. As the values are well defined, all it takes to finalize a zone is a transparent veil of color. I use pre-filtered jars of Liquitex Soft Body, which can be applied using a brush or airbrush. It's tempting to stop once the work on values and color is done. Luckily a well-meaning colleague (Mathieu Lauffray, all the time) is on hand to point out ways of moving forward.



Because now the finalization begins: using all the techniques at your disposal to create details and blurred area, the vibrations an image needs to come alive. Colored pencils, opaque paints, airbrush shading, more toothbrush... corrections of tint, subliminal details like light diffraction on crystal shards, all play a part in the impact of the image. All this takes place in a joyous shamle of diverse media and materials, much more alive for me than using a stylus or a mouse. All the more so because at this stage, massive mistakes are still possible, and the threat of failure intensifies the healthy sense of pressure...

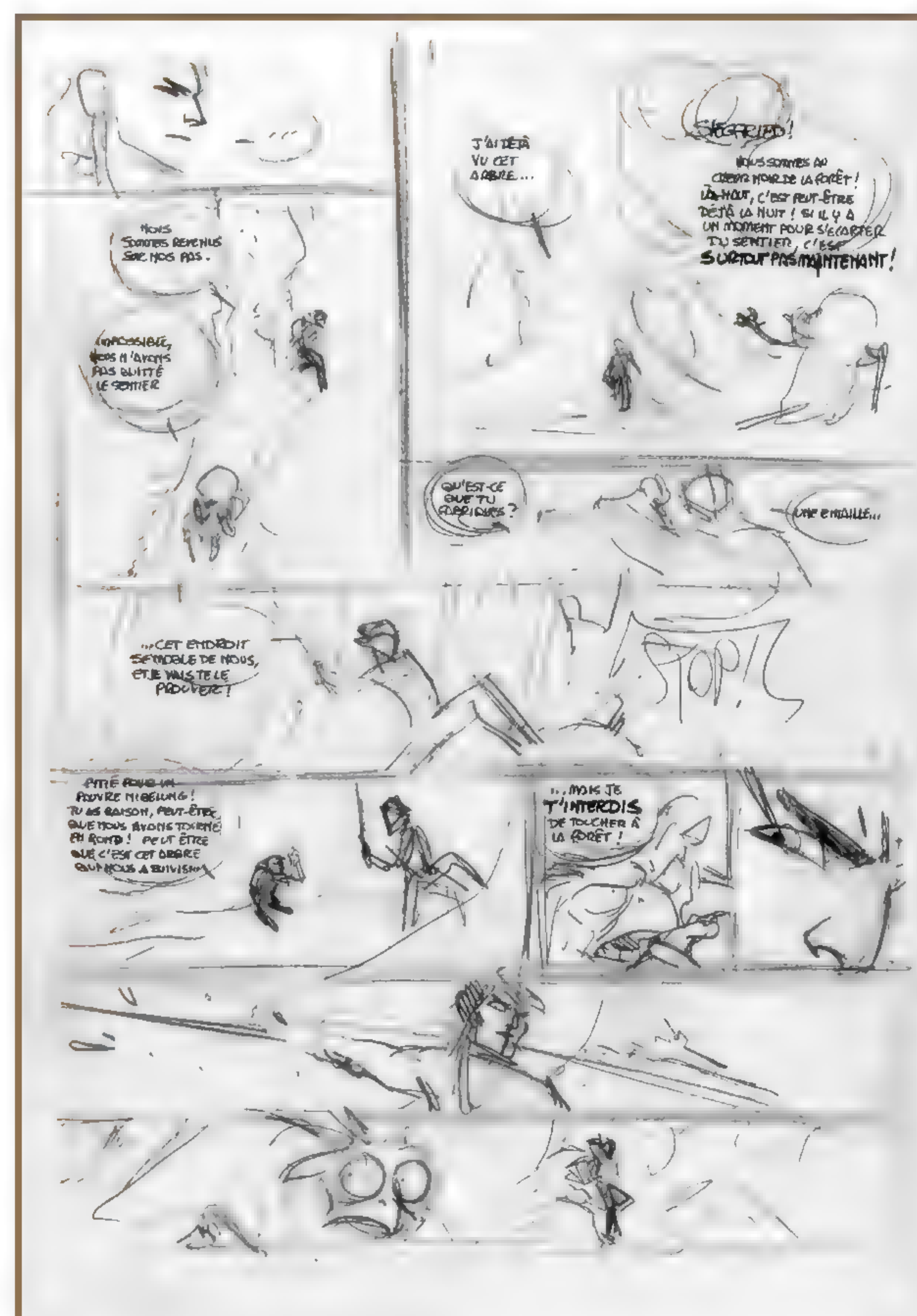
Then comes the moment of reproduction via scanner or digital camera. Once I get the digital file, I retouch it to make it conform to my vision for the original, or improve it. In this case, I was satisfied with just enhancing the contrast a little to get the image I wanted. I integrate the title, playing a little game of mating typography and illustration, in hopes of making the dragon really leap out of the cover. As I write these words, I can only hope it worked!

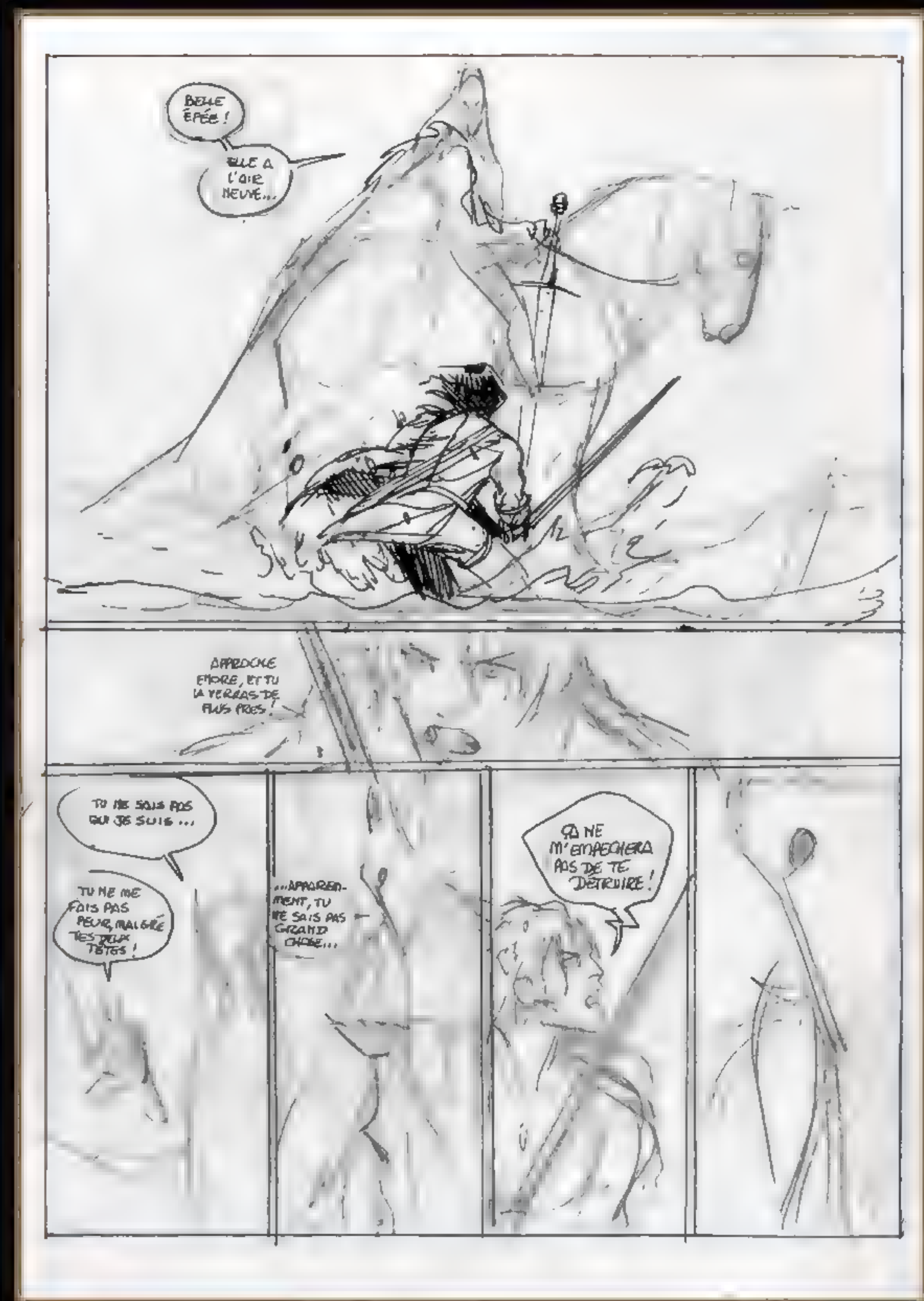


III IN THE FORGE

DELETED SCENES

This is a scene I did fairly early, before I even began Book I. It's part of a series of attempts to bring the characters to life in comics form, and see how well that worked. According to my sources, Siegfried and the Valkyrie, whose love story is one of the story's main driving forces, never meet until the final scene. I found this very strange, so I tried to create occasions for them to meet and breathe some more life into this tale. I'm not really at ease with the characters yet here, and it shows. The Valkyrie is a bit too upset, and Siegfried too much of a rebellious teenager...





III IN THE FORGE

ALEX ALICE:
SIEGFRIED.



GÖTTER DÄMMERUNG

SIEGFRIED

LOGO

Typography plays an important role in complementing the image and indicating a series' genre and general intent. It's even more vital in this case, where the title is a single word—a character's name—since not every reader knows who Siegfried is.

My first sketches tended toward a fairly ornamental style, very "fantasy." But none of them convinced me. They lacked simplicity, and failed to invoke the archetypal, primal quality I wanted in the story.

In the end, I went back to a simple, compact form whose angularity recalled runic writing, but also an almost Art Deco aspect. By distressing the lettering to give it an age-old look, I got a logo that, to my eyes, really fit my character.

SIEGFRIED.



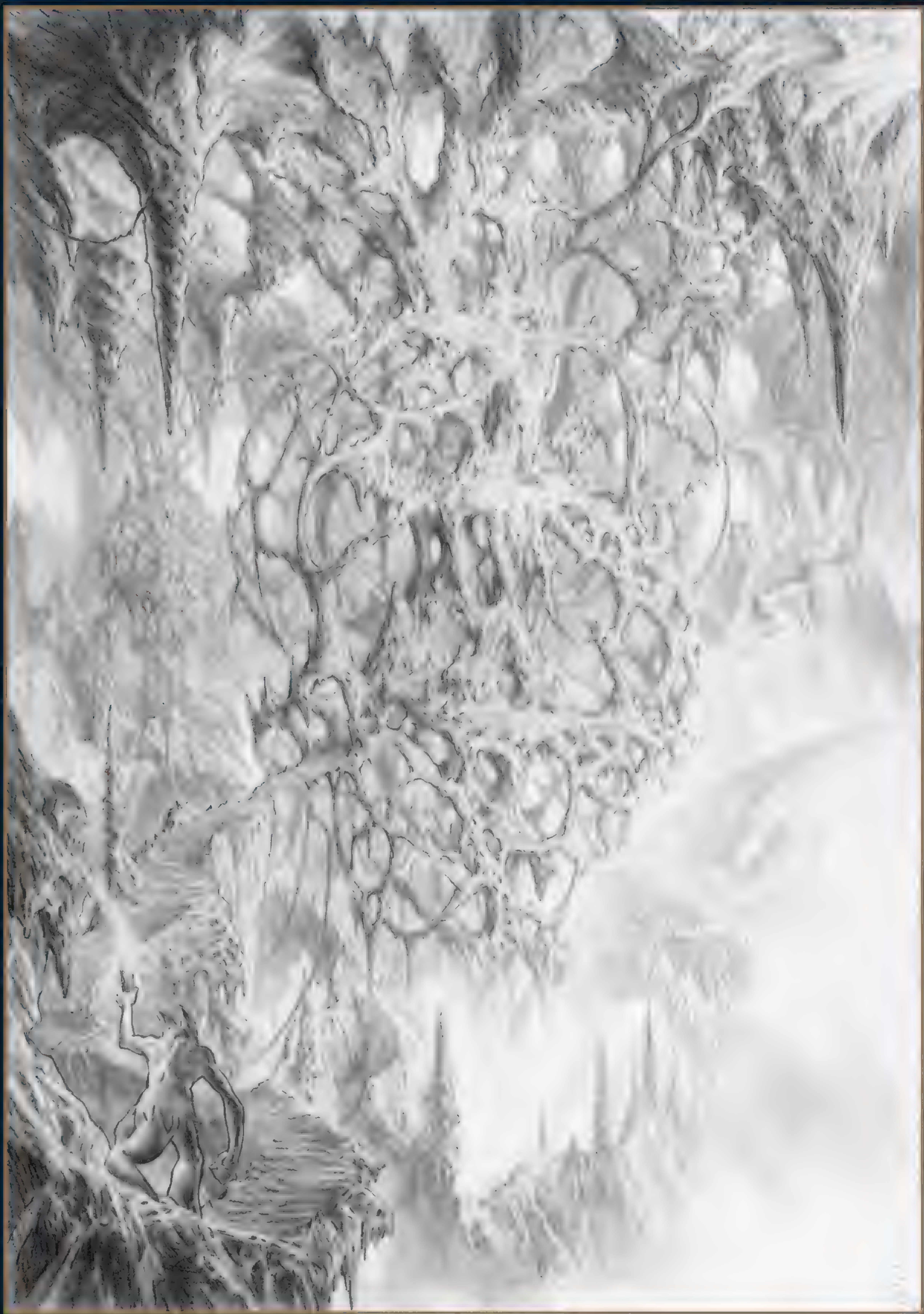
MATHIEU LAUFFRAY · KURT HUGGINS · PATRICK PION · DENIS BAJRAM · JEAN-PAUL KRASSINSKY



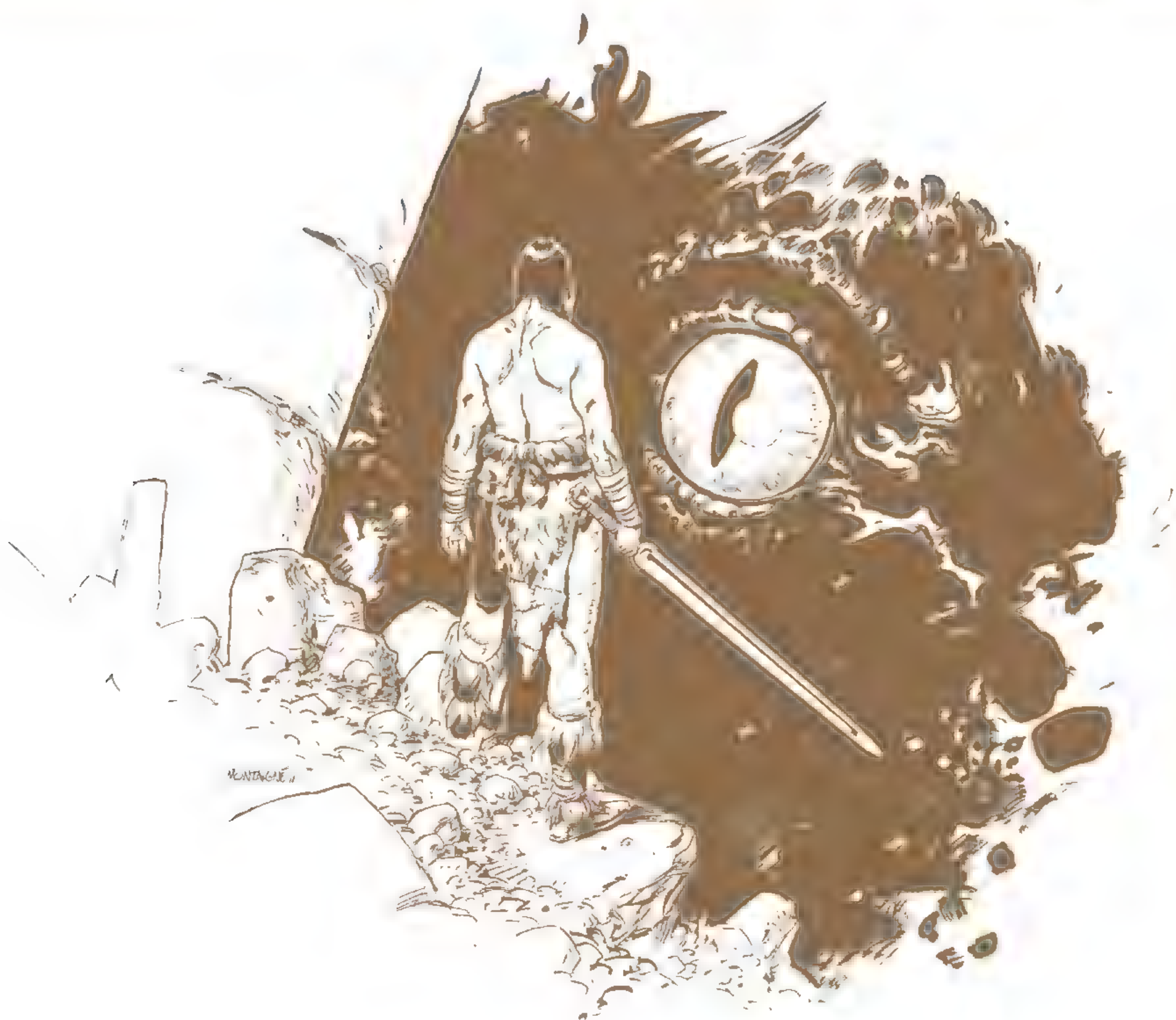
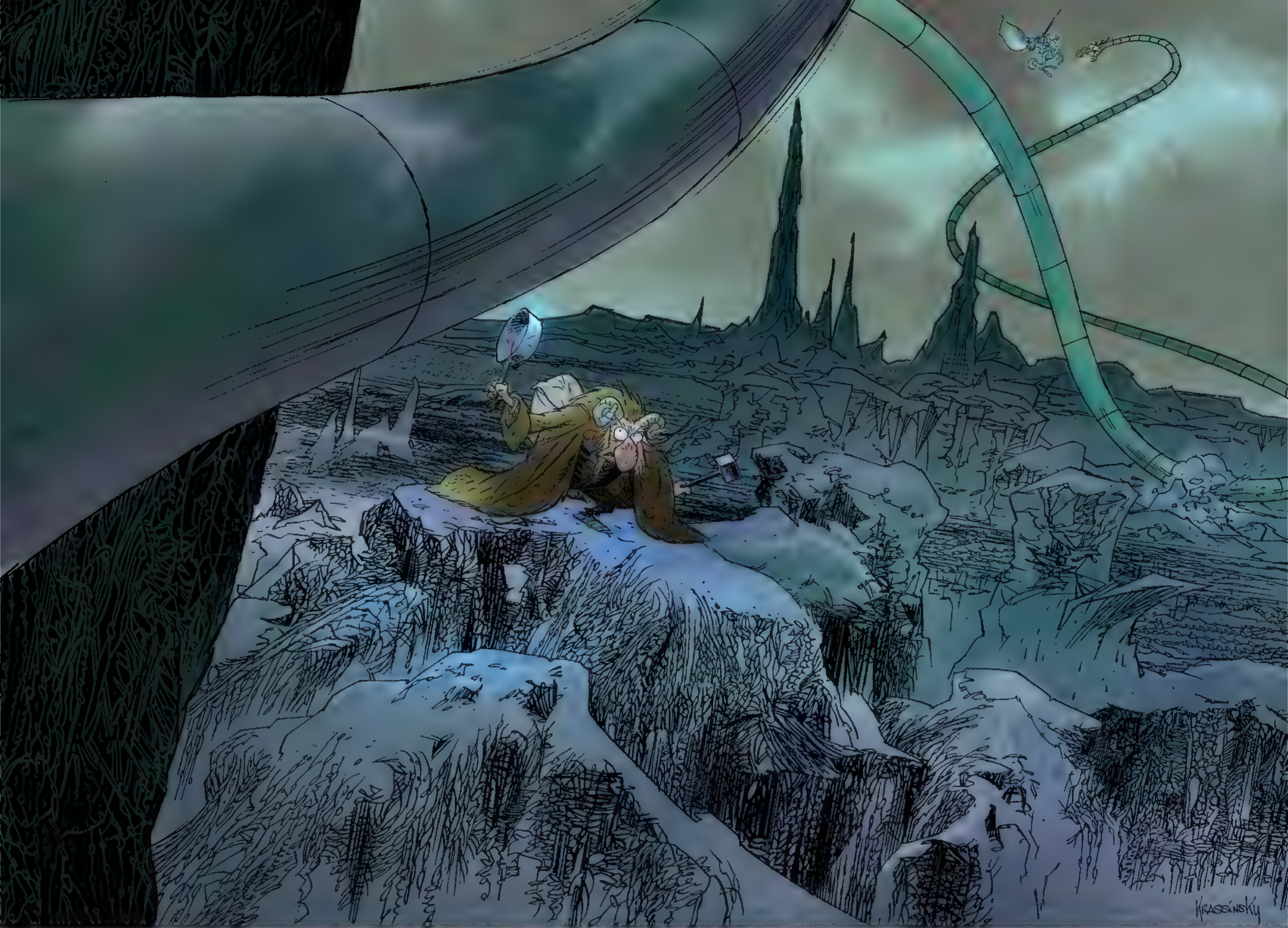
THIMOTHÉE MONTAIGNE · CHRISTIAN ROSSI · ALEC SEVERIN · KERASCOËT · JUANJO GUARNIDO · ZÉBÉ













Rosa







C. J. Fournier
2011



ALEX, OR THE ART OF DOING THINGS REALLY BIG

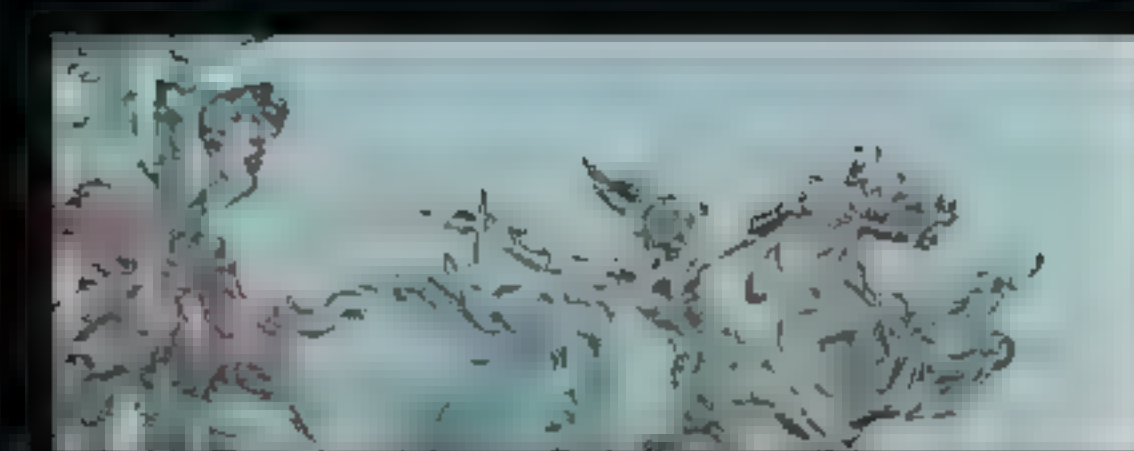
BOOK CREDITS



(PAGE 92)
SIEGFRIED, by Fritz Lang from *Der Nibelungen* (1924).



(PAGE 159)
Patrick Pion



(PAGE 164-165)
Alec Séverin



(PAGE 96-97)
SIEGFRIED UND ALBERICH IN DER NEBELWIESE, by Fritz Lang from *Der Nibelungen* (1924). Akg-images, exclusively for press/publishing use.



(PAGE 160)
Denis Bajram



(PAGE 166)
Kerascoët



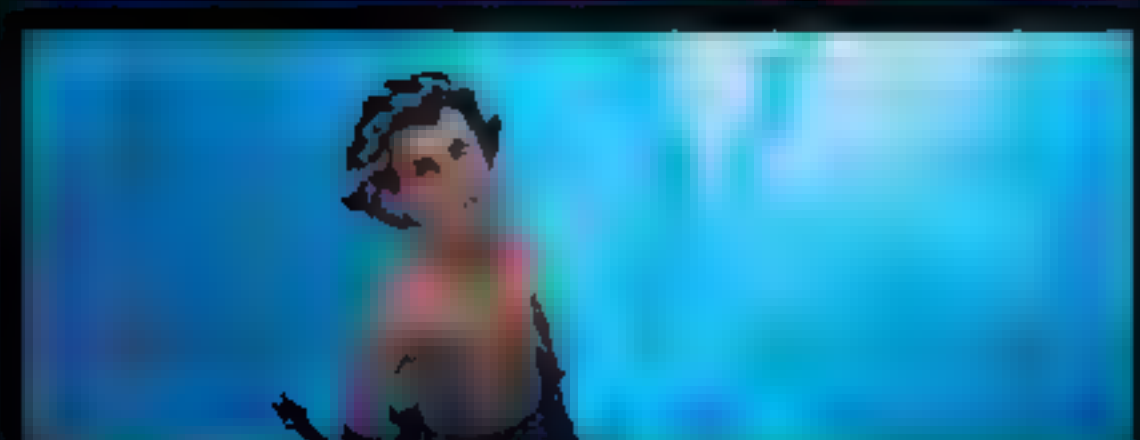
(PAGE 108)
VALHALLA, by Franz Stassen (1869-1949)



(PAGE 161)
Jean-Paul Krassinsky



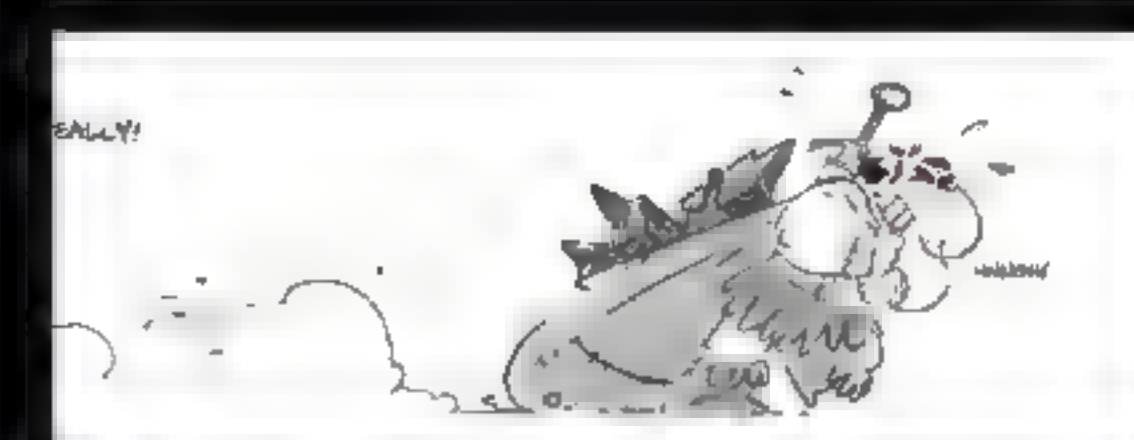
(PAGE 167)
Juanjo Guarnido



(PAGE 157)
Mathieu Lauffray



(PAGE 161)
Thimothée Montaigne



(PAGE 168-169)
Zébé



(PAGE 158)
Kurt Huggins



(PAGE 162-163)
Christian Rossi

Images taken from the animated film were created by the studio Bibò Films; see complete credits in Book I.



ALEX ALICE REVISITS THE MYTH



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks again to the Einherjar named in Book I, whose support all the way through really counted for this first incarnation of Siegfried (awaiting the film). I'd also like to thank the team at Dargaud, especially Philippe Ostermann and Renaud de Châteaubourg. May their cups always be full of Heiðrún's mead!

**ALEX
ALICE**







ALEX ALICE

In 1993, Alex Alice met Xavier Dorison while attending the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce of Paris. They collaborated on the comic book *The Third Testament*—a story of adventure and esoteric inquiry across Europe from the Middle Ages. Largely influenced by Umberto Eco, the book quickly became a success and established a wave of esoteric thrillers in the French comic book market. Alice went on to create his beloved trilogy *Siegfried*, and is now working on his acclaimed 19th century space adventure series *Castle of the Stars*.

THE COMPLETE SIEGFRIED SAGA



ZILEX ZILICE
SIEGFRIED



ZILEX ZILICE
SIEGFRIED II
THE VALKYRIE



ZILEX ZILICE
SIEGFRIED III
TWILIGHT OF THE GODS



*The breathtaking conclusion to master storyteller Alex Alice's groundbreaking adaptation of Wagner's **Ring of the Nibelung** opera cycle brings the ancient Norse legend to life with spellbinding artistry. Young Siegfried has made it to the Land of Mists and now must face the great Dragon Fafnir at last and fight for the survival of mankind, no matter what the sacrifice.*

BORN IN VIKING SAGAS
AND WAGNER'S CLASSIC OPERA

SIEGFRIED™



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